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IAFOR Journal of Education: Language Learning in Education

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From the Editor

Greetings readers! Welcome to this issue of *IAFOR Journal of Education: Volume 11 – Issue 1 –Language Learning in Education*.

Since the publication of the 2023 issue, the number of those engaged in the pursuit of learning an additional language has continued to increase. In conjunction with the burgeoning growth of second language learners is the need for adequately prepared teachers of supplementary languages who can motivate, teach with inspiration, encourage, and support language learners of all ages whose first languages are quite diverse. Clearly, individuals and groups are on the move whether because of negative factors such as domestic tragedy, political unrest, civil instability, and war or for the more positive influences of seeking a change in location, family reunification, education, adventure, the desire to learn a new language or to gain different employment. Both adverse and constructive dynamics have led to a substantial displacement of a multitude of persons who must learn another language in order to work, study, and become a member of another society. The motives for adding to one's linguistic repertoire notwithstanding, the process is multilayered, stimulating, instructive about peoples, languages, and cultures, and often challenging.

Numerous factors influence a person's second language acquisition. The impact of school, educators, and instruction cannot be overstated. By the time second language learners (L2 learners) have had 5-7 years of instruction in the second language (L2), it is anticipated that those with adequate instruction would be able to comprehend most instructions and content in L2. Yet, educators sometimes discover that the negative affective aspects of language learning such as anxiety, cultural bereavement, language loss, rejection of language and ethnic identity, fear of ridicule because of behavioral or linguistic errors, and a lack of motivation and interest may combine to cause a certain disequilibrium that undermines the second language acquisition process. Among forcibly displaced groups, the new language may be perceived as a type of assault on ethnic and linguistic identity. When students and educators fail to see their cultural and language experiences reflected in the target language curriculum, they may be unable to see themselves as successful in learning the additional language.

The authors of the articles in this issue have researched a wide array of topics related to L2 acquisition and second language teaching. They come from different countries, live in a variety of cultures, and speak different languages. Yet, they are united by the common language of researching, exploring, and discovering what is crucial in the quest for effectual second language acquisition.

Multilingualism, second language acquisition, second language learning, and national language policy endure as important concerns for every nation. The movement of individuals from country to country and within nations seems to intensify. As the realm of second language learners expands in size, educators, scholars, and researchers who explore the complex nature of L2 acquisition and learning are vital to the improvement of second language teaching and enhanced learning. Readers of the articles in this issue will encounter several studies that were

conducted with adult language learners or the teachers of L2 learners. Commonalities that exist across nations and cultures where language learning is a consideration were similarly investigated.

IAFOR Journal of Education: Volume 11 – Issue 1 –Language Learning in Education

Article 1

In the first article, "Language Attrition and Cultural Identity Dynamics in International Schools in Azerbaijan", Rena Alasgarova, Jeyhun Rzayev, and Mukhammadfoik Bakhadirov investigated the relationship between language attrition, cultural identity, and sociocultural factors in four international schools in Azerbaijan. The research explored acculturation strategies concerning loss of proficiency in the first language (L1), bicultural identity, and the connection between education level, language loss and the influence of attrition on cultural identity shift.

Article 2

Eleni Meletiadou, author of "Enriching International Students' Cross-Cultural and Multilingual Communication: The Serious Play Approach Utilizing Playmobil Pro Figures", implemented a study with international multilingual students who were involved in two Playmobil pro workshops. The aim was to actively engage students to develop their intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communicative skills. This case study used a qualitative design and explored students' attitudes regarding intercultural communication.

Article 3

In "Adults' Perceptions of Studying English in Face-to-Face, Online, and Blended Modalities", Tatiana Ginzburg and Linda Daniela completed a study that explored what might be the more effective teaching methodology in foreign language instruction for adult educators working with adult students. Since adult learners often experience multiple demands on their time, the researchers wanted to know whether a particular approach employed for teaching a language course for adult language learners was perceived to be more effective.

Article 4

Ayse Taskiran and Hong Pan, authors of, "EFL Learners' Attributions and Causal Dimensionality Styles in the Chinese Higher Education Context" wrote about the findings from a study they conducted in China to investigate achievement motivation among adult language learners studying foreign language in a variety of degree programs within different types of higher education institutions. The findings of the mixed methods study were surprising, revealing that two thirds of the participants identified themselves as ineffective learners. Both in success and failure conditions the participants mentioned effort, interest, and ability as the contributing attributions.

Article 5

In “Intercultural Communication: The Perceptions of Lebanese High School Directors”, authors Najwa Saba ‘Ayon, Farah Sabbah, and Mira M. Alameddine wanted to discover selected Lebanese high school directors’ perceptions of intercultural communication. Results of the study revealed that while intercultural communication was considered an important learning outcome, it was seldom taught outside of the foreign language classroom.

Article 6

Olusiji Adebola Lasekan, author of “Roles of Gender and Academic Discipline in English for Specific Purposes”, investigated the subtle yet significant relationship between gender and academic discipline in shaping the ESP needs of higher education students. The study looked at the impact of gender and academic discipline on Chilean dentistry and business administration students' perceived lack, want, and need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The findings suggested that educational practitioners should develop ESP curricula that attend to specific professional terms and settings as well as the roles of gender and discipline in language learning.

Article 7

In “Adoption of Innovative ELT Strategies by English Language Teachers in Rural Laos”, Linda Doeden and Esther Smidt examined factors affecting the adoption of successful English language teaching strategies by Lao language teachers. Their study aimed to discern what caused Lao teachers to reject a more effective approach to teaching language. The author/researchers described the identified barriers as deriving from “internal and external realities”. Their findings pointed to the development of a more culturally relevant curriculum for the teachers.

Article 8

Soniya Antony, R Ramnath, and Adil Ellikkal, authors of “Examining Students’ Perspectives on Pedagogical Translanguaging in the Multilingual Classroom Context”, explored pedagogical translanguaging and its role in the multilingual classroom for adult language learners. The qualitative study examined students’ perspectives of pedagogical translanguaging in a classroom where students were multilingual and learning an additional language. The results of the study yielded recommendations for enhancing instructional strategies to be utilized in language classrooms.

Article 9

In “Using Screencast Video Feedback in the 21st Century EFL Writing Class”, Nato Pachuashvili investigated the use of screencast video feedback when providing corrections for adult language learners in an English as a foreign language writing class. The mixed methods

study looked at the effectiveness of using screencast video feedback on EFL writing and students' perceptions of receiving video feedback for their written assignments. The findings divulged that students considered video feedback to be interactive and supportive of the learning-to-write in a foreign language process.

Article 10

Kira Adams and Sachiko Nakano, authors of "Connecting Student Interest and Motivation in English to the Sustainable Development Goals", explored motivation and interest for adult English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Japan. Their study investigated the use of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations, as a motivational and interest stimulating tool. Through this research, Adams and Nakano had students identify which SDGs were most interesting and, therefore, intrinsically motivational in classes where language was taught using topics of personal relevance.

The topics researched and discussed in the 2024 issue of the IAFOR Journal of Education: Language Learning in Education will enlighten and encourage the reader about the critical thinking and innovative research that is ongoing in the field of second language acquisition and second language learning.

Happy reading!

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Notes on Contributors

Article 1

Language Attrition and Cultural Identity Dynamics in International Schools in Azerbaijan

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Article 2

Enriching Students' Cross-Cultural and Multilingual Communication: The Serious Play Approach Utilizing Playmobil Pro Figures

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Article 3

Adults' Perceptions of Studying English in Face-to-Face, Online, and Blended Modalities

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Article 4

EFL Learners' Attributions and Causal Dimensionality Styles in the Chinese Higher Education Context

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Intercultural Communication: The Perceptions of Lebanese High School Directors

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Roles of Gender and Academic Discipline in English for Specific Purposes

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Article 7
Adoption of Innovative ELT Strategies by English Language Teachers in Rural Laos

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Article 9

Examining Students' Perspectives on Pedagogical Translanguaging in the Multilingual Classroom Context

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Article 9

Using Screencast Video Feedback in the 21st Century EFL Writing Class

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Article 10

Connecting Student Interest and Motivation in English to the Sustainable Development Goals

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Language Attrition and Cultural Identity Dynamics in International Schools in Azerbaijan

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between language attrition, cultural identity, and sociocultural factors in four international schools in Azerbaijan. Two distinct student groups, one undergoing English education since preschool (Group 1) and another transitioning to English after primary school (Group 2), were examined to discern the connection between language attrition, cultural identity, and sociocultural factors. The research explored acculturation strategies concerning loss of proficiency in the first language(L1) and bicultural identity and formulated hypotheses to assess the connection between education level and language loss and the influence of attrition on cultural identity shift. Employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, the research utilized native language proficiency tests and e-surveys for quantitative analysis, while focus group interviews and thematic analysis investigated qualitative aspects. The e-survey uncovered factors influencing L1 attrition, with Group 1 exhibiting lower native language proficiency, suggesting an impact of second language (L2) exposure. Regression analysis revealed that language skills, English communication preferences, and thinking in English predicted lower proficiency in L1, while the duration of L2 exposure played a pivotal role in shaping cultural identity. Focus group interviews demonstrated a subtle narrative of cultural shift and assimilation within the international school context. The theoretical framework and thematic analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the acculturation experiences of international school students, emphasizing the concept of culture attrition influenced by diverse factors.

Keywords: acculturation, culture attrition, culture shift, language attrition, international school

Language is a dynamic element of human communication that significantly shapes cultural identity and heritage preservation (Köpke, 2004; Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2002; Schmid, 2011). The current study aimed at investigating the multifaceted relationship between language attrition, cultural identity, and the influence of sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and extralinguistic factors, framed within the context of international schools in a non-English macroenvironment. The focus of attention was on two distinct groups of school students to explore how variations in language education impact language proficiency and its consequences for cultural identity.

Language attrition, broadly characterized as the weakening or deterioration of language skills, particularly in bilingual or multilingual individuals, represents a linguistic phenomenon that transcends mere language loss or shift as it examines the nuances of language proficiency erosion due to reduced language use (Gallo et al., 2021; Köpke, 2004; Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2002; Schmid, 2011). Such extralinguistic factors as additive bilingualism, attitude, motivation, identity (Schmid, 2011), education level, and length of the second language (L2) exposure (Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2011) also contribute to language attrition. Therefore, understanding the role of extralinguistic factors is crucial for comprehending language attrition within a broader societal context. Despite being challenging to determine (Köpke & Schmid, 2004), education level influences language attrition through variations in language use and exposure to different linguistic environments, particularly concerning the age at which students begin learning L2.

The fundamental concepts of early language attrition theories (e.g., Dewaele, 2004; Köpke, 2004; Köpke & Genevska-Hanke, 2018; Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2002; Schmid, 2011; Yağmur, 2004) continue to offer crucial insights into the linguistic changes that occur in persons living in bilingual or multilingual contexts, despite the passage of time. The scarcity of contemporary studies that challenge or overhaul these foundational theories justifies their continued application in the analyses conducted in the study under investigation. Moreover, previous research has been restricted to examining the dynamics of language attrition in migrant settings; meanwhile, with the proliferation of international schools across the world, the language attrition process has shifted to an educational context due to its increasing relevance in international schools (Alasgarova, 2023).

In international schools, where English is used as a medium of instruction, students often become bilingual because of their immersive exposure to L2. Living in an international space, these students build their day-to-day interactions with teachers and peers of the same profile (Carder, 2013, p. 276) and adhere to English – only policies at school, thus picking up L2 naturally. The acquisition of the first language (L1) may slow down, causing additive bilingualism (Schmid, 2011). When the L2 has a high status as perceived by language learners, it tends to generate greater motivation to learn and use it. This motivation can be driven by practical benefits such as better career prospects, social prestige, or educational opportunities. Within an additive bilingual environment, one of the most significant concepts is the concept of language dominance and preference. Dominance pertains to the relative strength and proficiency of a language in an individual's repertoire, while preference signifies the subjective

choice of language for specific situations, reflecting the cultural, emotional, or social significance attached to a given language. Understanding the dynamics of language dominance and preference is crucial, as they significantly influence language loss and the resulting impact on cultural identity (Köpke & Genevska-Hanke, 2018).

There is a risk of cultural assimilation and identity shift, where the partial erosion of the native language and cultural practices can lead to a convergence with the dominant culture of the international school environment (Fitzsimons, 2019). Carder (2013) argues that international school students do not fall under the assimilationist model, often referred to as assimilationism, as there are no political incentives to promote assimilation or a specific nation-state to encourage such a process. However, many bilinguals tend to exhibit cultural dominance, adapting their cultural norms and behaviors based on their environment, social interactions, and their "favored identity" (Yilmaz, 2019, p. 313). As international schools use international curricula with insufficient native language and culture instructions (Alasgarova, 2023), it is hypothesized that L1 and culture attrition are now occurring in such academic settings.

In framing the present research, Berry's acculturation model was adopted. Exploring the dynamics of biculturalism, Berry's model offers four acculturation strategies – assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization – which represent different ways individuals and groups adopt or maintain cultural practices (Berry, 1997). Despite being developed over two decades ago, Berry's model maintains considerable significance and remains unparalleled in its thorough representation of acculturation processes, serving as a seminal framework for the exploration of the complex interrelationship of language attrition and bicultural identity. In the alignment with this model, the research examined how language attrition influenced bicultural identity and which acculturation strategies individuals adopted in response.

The research focused on two distinct groups of school students in Azerbaijan. The first group had been educated in English since they started their educational journey in pre-school, while the second group transitioned to an English-taught curriculum after completing primary school, usually at age 9 or 10 in Azerbaijan. To comprehensively explore the factors influencing language attrition and its impact on cultural identity, the research employed a multistage research approach.

The research was guided by two main hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis 1 (H01): There is no significant difference in the level of language attrition between students who have studied in English since pre-school and students who transitioned to an English-taught curriculum after completing primary school.
Alternative Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a significant difference in the level of language attrition between these two groups of students.
The responses were statistically analyzed to test the hypotheses related to the relationship between education level and L1 attrition and answer the research questions:

1. Does the duration of exposure to an English-only curriculum affect the level of L1 attrition among students in international schools?
2. What factors, such as language proficiency, language use, language of emotions and thoughts, and language preference, contribute to the observed differences in L1 attrition between the two groups of students?

Null Hypothesis 2 (H02): There is no significant relationship between the extent of language attrition and the shift in cultural identity among students.
Alternative Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a significant relationship between the extent of language attrition and the shift in cultural identity among students.

Participants were encouraged to share their experiences regarding possible diminished L1 proficiency and its potential impact on cultural identity to provide insights on the third research question:

3. To what extent does language attrition correlate with international students' reported sense of cultural identity shift or change, in accordance with Berry's acculturation model?

So far, research on language attrition has generally been restricted to immigrant settings. However, with the increasing number of international schools, the phenomenon of language attrition has been shifting to school students who reside in their home countries. Due to the limited research conducted in such settings, this paper provides new insights on L1 attrition.

Literature Review

Language Attrition and Extralinguistic Factors

Language attrition, the gradual erosion of language proficiency, is a complex phenomenon that constitutes "a special case of variation in the acquisition and use of language/s and can best be studied, described, documented, and explained within a large framework that includes all other phenomena of L1/L2 acquisition, bilingualism, language use/choice, code-switching/mixing, and language attitudes" (Yağmur, 2004, p. 136). These factors can be further extended to age, motivation, quality and quantity of input, length of L2 exposure, and education level.

Findings from acculturation studies in L2 acquisition also highlight the interdependence of increased motivation and elevated levels of success in acquiring L2 (Yilmaz, 2019). This underscores the significance of motivation not only in predicting success in L2 acquisition but also in influencing the attrition rate. A positive emotional stance towards one's native language culture plays a major role in maintaining proficiency in the native language. Consequently, individuals with a strong inclination to immerse themselves in the second culture may experience greater attrition in their native language, especially if L1 loses practical and symbolic significance for them. In such cases, the diminished motivation to uphold the native language could contribute to a higher likelihood of L1 attrition (Yilmaz, 2019).

Research by Schmid (2011) emphasizes the role of identity in language attrition, highlighting that the attriters' attitude towards their native language and L2, as well as their motivation to use these languages, play pivotal roles in the attrition process. Furthermore, Köpke and Schmid (2004) argue that education level and the length of exposure to L2 are crucial extralinguistic factors contributing to language attrition. Education level influences language attrition through variations in language use and exposure to different linguistic environments. The longer the exposure to L2, the more profound the impact on the attrition process (Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid & Cherciov, 2019). As individuals progress through different educational stages, the strength of their native language may diminish due to increased dominance of L2 in academic settings. As the study of language attrition continues to evolve, a holistic consideration of extralinguistic factors, particularly education level and length of L2 input, remains integral to comprehending the intertwined relationship of language proficiency, identity, and sociocultural dynamics.

Sociocultural Approach to Language Attrition and the Acculturation Process

Cross-linguistic influence in multilingual environments involves transferring linguistic features across languages, impacting vocabulary, grammar, and usage patterns. This blending of elements can enhance language learning but may also cause interference, where features from one language impede the proper use or understanding of another (Kubota et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2023). Concurrently, language attrition, marked by the gradual deterioration of language skills, is exhibited when individuals experience reduced use of their L1 due to increased exposure to L2 (Gallo et al., 2021; Köpke & Schmid, 2004). This relation extends beyond linguistic interaction, as "in the process of negotiating two languages, bilinguals also need to manage two cultural systems, which can become as interrelated as the languages they speak" (Yilmaz, 2019, p. 307). Research by Kashima (2019) emphasizes the bidirectional relationship involving acculturation and language use, highlighting how changes in cultural identity can influence language choices and, subsequently, contribute to language attrition.

The sociocultural approach to language attrition underscores the significance of societal and cultural contexts in shaping language proficiency and bicultural experiences of individuals. According to Berry's acculturation model (Figure 1), which explores how individuals adopt or maintain cultural practices, language attrition is deeply intertwined with biculturalism (Berry, 1997). In this framework, four acculturation strategies – assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization – represent various ways individuals and groups engage with and navigate cultural practices.

Figure 1

Berry's Acculturation Model

Value and Maintain Host Culture	Value and Maintain Native Culture: Yes	Value and Maintain Native Culture: No
Yes	Integration	Assimilation
No	Separation	Marginalization

Language attrition, within this paradigm, is not solely a linguistic phenomenon but is closely tied to the broader process of cultural assimilation or preservation and acculturation. Individuals undergoing language attrition may experience shifts in their bicultural identity as they adapt to the dominant cultural practices of their environment. The sociocultural approach recognizes that language use is embedded in social interactions and cultural norms, and language attrition reflects not only a decline in linguistic proficiency but also a potential reshaping of bicultural identity.

Methodology

The given research was aimed at investigating the relationship between education level and L1 attrition, as well as the impact of language attrition on the loss of cultural identity among students. The following research objectives were set to explore the language attrition phenomenon and its dynamics in international school settings:

- To examine the relationship between education level and L1 attrition among students who transitioned from a national curriculum to an international English-taught curriculum after completing primary school.
- To assess the impact of language attrition on the loss of cultural identity among students, exploring the correlation with Berry's acculturation model.

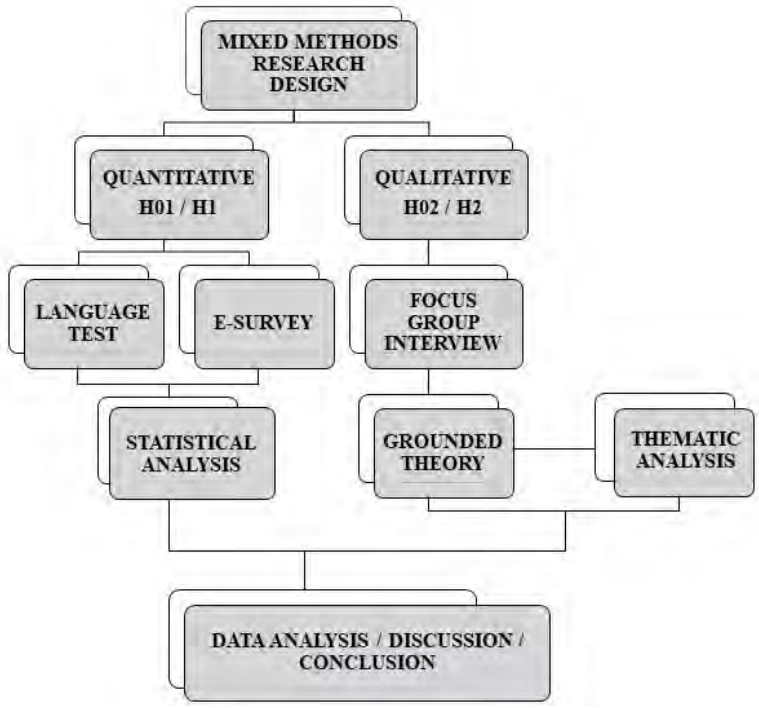
The study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship concerning education level, L1 attrition, and its impact on cultural identity. This methodology is verified by its capacity to offer a holistic understanding by integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights and is suitable for analysis of a multifaceted trend at several levels (Obeyd, 2021, p.59). In the quantitative phase, data was collected through an L1

test and a structured e-survey distributed among the two identified groups of students. The L1 proficiency language test was aimed at measuring the current level of control of the Azerbaijani language among the selected students, while the e-survey included questions designed to investigate the patterns of language use and language preferences.

After the quantitative phase and to investigate the second hypothesis concerning the impact of language attrition on the loss of cultural identity, the qualitative aspect of the research used a focus group interview with participants from both groups. The choice of this methodology framework (Figure 2) provided a holistic approach to the objectives of the research and facilitated more reliable and valid data collection and analysis. Grounded theory and thematic analysis were applied for qualitative analysis, which was examined with MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2021). Triangulation design involved gathering and examining both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, allowing the researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and reduce research bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Figure 2

Methodology Framework



Population and Sample

The selection of an appropriate population and sampling strategy is integral to the validity and reliability of any research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). A stratified purposeful sampling approach was utilized for the purpose of this investigation, as the main objectives of the research were to examine the relationship presented by education level, L1 attrition, and the impact on cultural identity within specific settings. Although mainly used for qualitative research, stratified purposeful sampling serves the purpose of selecting participants to enhance

representation and improve the precision of analysis. This approach enables focused investigation of specific subgroups, effectively addressing the diversity within the population and ensuring that the results are relevant to the entire population (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). All the participants, regardless of the education stage at which they commenced the English-instructed curriculum, were grade 10 students and had two Azerbaijani language classes a week at their schools.

To initiate the sampling process, permission was sought from the principals of four international schools in Azerbaijan. The selection of schools depended on their sizable cohort of students fitting the research criteria. Having been informed about the objectives of the research, the principals granted official permission to conduct the research within the school premises.

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in the research process, especially when the research involves children. Minor participants may lack the cognitive and decision-making capacities of adults, making them more susceptible to potential risks and harm in research settings. Additionally, maintaining research ethics builds trust with parents/legal guardians, fostering a positive research environment. Adhering to ethical guidelines also contributes to the credibility and validity of research outcomes, as it upholds the integrity of the scientific process (McCabe & Pao, 2021). The next stage included obtaining the parental consent form by the participants' parents/legal guardians. The form was compiled in accordance with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct: Standard 8.03 "Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research" (American Psychological Association, 2017). The consent forms outlined the detailed nature of the research, provided contact information for the researchers, and explicitly stated the right of parents/ legal guardians to inquire about the research and withdraw their children from participation at any stage of the research.

The final sample comprised a hundred students in each group, resulting in a total of two hundred participants for the first phase of the study, including the language proficiency test and e-survey. Further, for the focus group interviews, 20 participants, 10 in each group, were randomly selected to ensure that in smaller homogeneous focus groups all the participants had a chance to contribute to the discussion (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Prior to the interview, the researchers conducted a pre-investigation session with the students. During this meeting, the significance of the research was explained, and students were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary. This proactive engagement aimed to establish a sense of understanding and comfort among the participants, fostering an environment conducive to open and authentic responses during subsequent tests, e-surveys, and interviews.

Data Collection

To examine the correlation between education level and L1 attrition in students who transitioned to an international English-taught curriculum, the study applied the quantitative research method by analyzing data collected through an L1 proficiency test and e-survey. Quantitative research in linguistics possesses undeniable qualities, since it follows a methodical

and controlled approach, utilizing precise measurements to yield dependable and generalized outcomes (Obeyd, 2021).

The L1 proficiency test was based on the Azerbaijani language final exam for grade 9 international school students administered by the State Examination Center of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The test consists of 30 questions to be completed in 90 minutes and includes four listening comprehension questions, ten grammar questions, and two reading comprehension sections with eight questions per section. All test items are close-ended questions. To address one of the research questions, namely, to estimate the degree to which the length of exposure to the international curriculum contributes to two groups of participants' decreased proficiency in L1 skills and systems, the test was adopted upon the researchers' request. The Azerbaijani language expert from the State Examination Center substituted one reading comprehension section with eight multiple-choice questions on lexis and one essay writing task that fit the grade 9 Azerbaijani language framework used in international schools. The expert also provided detailed assessment rubrics and mark schemes to ensure a transparent and objective evaluation of the results.

To ensure the inter-rater reliability, fair marking, and consistency in results and validity of the L1 proficiency test, the pilot test was administered with two groups of students of an identical background in a different international school in Azerbaijan (Green, 2020). Ten students, five per group, were invited to participate in the pilot testing. The language expert, who reviewed the test, and two additional qualified assessors from two different schools evaluated the responses to the pilot test independently. The results of the pilot phase were then subjected to Cohen's Kappa coefficient to ensure the inter-rater reliability of the coding process, confirming that the observational data were consistently interpreted and categorized by different researchers (Kolesnyk & Khairova, 2022).

To measure the extent to which such linguistic factors as language proficiency, language use, language of thought, and language preference contribute to the decreased proficiency in L1, the researchers prepared the e-survey, which comprised eight sections and encompassed 23 closed-ended questions specifically tailored for this study using Microsoft Forms (Microsoft Forms, n.d.). Likert scale questions were utilized to quantify variables in the e-survey, where participants rated their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale. This standard method in social science research provided a quantitative measure of attitudes and perceptions, essential for the analysis (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). The survey was conducted online, leveraging the efficiency of the Internet for survey administration, where the automation of response collection and data analysis processes streamlined the overall procedure (Torrentira, 2020). The review of the e-survey content by a language expert from the Ministry of Education ensured that the designed questions addressed the research variables. Because the primary focus of quantitative research rests in outlining relationships among variables, this type of research approach seemed appropriate (Obeyd, 2021).

The research hypothesized that factors like language proficiency, language usage, the language associated with emotions and thoughts, and language preference account for the differences in

the language attrition process between the two student groups with different lengths of L2 input in academic settings. Language attrition is argued to be influenced by the level of education because of the advantage of L1 literacy that older children usually possess (Köpke, 2004, p. 1338); in this regard, education level constituted an independent variable reflected in Section 2 *Language Background* Questions 3 and 4 of the e-survey.

As language attrition is a complex phenomenon encompassing sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors, it cannot "divorce from its social context", and to discuss or investigate it outside this context seems to be an unattainable task (Yağmur, 2004, p. 134). Dependent variables included language proficiency (Section 3 *Language Proficiency Questions* 5 and 6), language use (Section 5 *L1 Skills and Systems* Questions 10 to 15), language of emotions and thoughts (Section 6 *Language of Emotion and Stress* Questions 16 to 18and Section 7 *Language of Thoughts and Dreams* Questions 19 to 21), and language preference (Section 8 *Language Preference for Communication* Questions 22 and 23).

For instance, language proficiency was assessed through questions asking participants to rate their proficiency in their first language and English on a scale from 1 (very low proficiency) to 5 (very high proficiency). Similarly, language use was explored through questions that measured the extent of decrease in language skills, such as "Please indicate the extent to which you have experienced a decrease in grammar proficiency on a scale from 1 (no shift) to 5 (significant shift)". The language of emotions and thoughts was examined by questions such as "Please specify the primary language in which you think and plan your thoughts on a scale from 1 (always in your first language) to 5 (always in English)". "Language preference" for communication was measured by questions like "Please indicate your preference for spoken communication with family and friends on a scale from 1 (always using your first language) to 5 (always using English)".

The inclusion of these factors is grounded in the idea that interactive language use (communication in spoken and written modes of the language), non-interactive exposure to language (reading), and inner language (thoughts, dreams, counting, etc.) are said to be further analyzed to bring clarity into distinctions among these modes of L1 use (Schmid, 2011, p. 83). In an interview with Kapitsa, Chernigovskaya also stated that some criteria for selecting a native language from the languages in which the language user is fluent are in what language they think and count, as well as the language they switch to in a critical situation (Timofeev, 2012).

Control variables age and gender (Section 1 *Demographic Information* Questions 2 and 3) helped to maintain consistency in the demographics of the sample. Furthermore, promotion of the native language in the household, native language instruction at school, and the number of native language classes (Section 4 *L1* Input Questions 7 to 9) enhanced the internal validity, ensuring that any observed differences in language attrition can be attributed to the educational level rather than extraneous factors.
Microsoft Forms employs encryption measures for data both at rest (ensuring the security of stored inactive data on any device) and in transit (safeguarding data during its movement from one virtual location to another) (*Security and Privacy in Microsoft Forms,* n.d.). This

encryption protocol guaranteed the confidentiality and security of the acquired data throughout the survey process.

To address the second alternative hypothesis, namely, to examine the connection involving language attrition and cultural identity shift and suggest some recommendations about L1 retentions in international schools, the research employed a qualitative methodology to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the subjective experiences and viewpoints of individuals (Busetto et al., 2020; Obeyd, 2021).

Focus group interviews were selected as a research tool for this stage of the study to gather rich and varied perspectives on language attrition and its implications for cultural identity among participants. This method proved particularly effective in identifying shared patterns and unique variations in how individuals perceive and manage the impact of diminishing language skills within their cultural contexts (Obeyd, 2021).

The focus group interview questions were formulated to elicit rich and varied responses from participants. To enhance the validity and relevance of the questions, an expert from the Ministry of Education conducted a thorough review. The expert's input was invaluable in refining the questions, aligning them with current educational standards and practices, and ensuring they were clear, unbiased, and appropriate for the target demographic. After the initial review by the education expert, the investigators conducted a pilot test of the focus group interview questions with ten students who participated in piloting the language test. Th pilot test allowed an observation of how the questions were interpreted in real-time and provided insights into whether they elicited the depth and breadth of responses that were anticipated. Criteria for evaluating the responses from the focus group sessions were established to ensure the data could be consistently interpreted and aligned with research goals.

The nature of semi-structured interview questions is inherently open-ended. While these questions provide a guide to ensure that all relevant topics are covered, they also offer the flexibility to probe further based on the given responses (Luke & Goodrich, 2019). Questions 2 to 5 touched upon the participants perceptions of the correlation between language attrition and cultural identity shift, for instance "Can you describe any specific instances or experiences where you feel your language skills have declined or changed as a result of your educational journey?" and "Do you believe that changes in your language skills have affected your sense of cultural identity?". Questions 6 to 7 aimed at encouraging the participants to discuss the process of acculturation, asking "Are there any challenges or conflicts you've encountered due to the shift in your cultural identity?" While Questions 8 to 10 elicited the participants' ideas and opinions on preservation of cultural identity and suggestions for improvement, inquiring "Are there strategies or activities you engage in to preserve your cultural identity and language proficiency? If so, could you describe some of these?". Closing questions in semi-structured interviews were crafted to gather participants' final reflections and uncover any additional insights. They prompted participants to summarize key points and introduce new ideas that might not have been discussed, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the topic (Luke &

Goodrich, 2019). Following the closing question, it was important to question whether the participants had anything to add (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The validity of the focus group method was ensured by using well-constructed, contextually relevant questions tailored to the participants' cultural backgrounds and experiences. The semi-structured interviews were developed with a preset set of key questions to maintain reliability throughout all discussions, hence augmenting the research's trustworthiness (Luke & Goodrich, 2019). Data collected during the discussion was securely stored, and access was restricted to the research team to ensure the protection of sensitive information and identities of participants.

In this research, transcription and coding processes were facilitated through the use of Notta for transcribing audio recordings (*Notta – AI Transcription & Meeting Notetaker*, n.d.) and MAXQDA for coding and data analysis (VERBI Software, 2021). Notta provided an efficient platform for transcribing spoken discourse, enabling accurate representation of participants' responses (*Notta – AI Transcription & Meeting Notetaker*, n.d.). MAXQDA, a widely used qualitative data analysis tool, played a crucial role in organizing and coding the data (Santos et al., 2021). Grounded theory, which allows researchers to investigate connections involving actions and meanings (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021, p.308), enabled a dynamic approach to the analysis of focus group data, ensuring that the development of theoretical insights was directly grounded in participant responses. Thematic analysis, following Dawadi's (2020) approach, focused on identifying and analyzing recurring themes within the dataset.

While focus group interviews offer insights into the perspectives and experiences of the participants, one significant limitation is the potential for dominant participants to overshadow quieter group members, which can skew the data and reduce the diversity of viewpoints expressed. Additionally, the group setting may inhibit some participants from expressing dissenting opinions or sensitive information, leading to a conformity bias that can impact the authenticity of the responses (Dawadi, 2020). Despite these limitations, focus group interviews remain a valuable qualitative method for exploring complex phenomena and capturing diverse perspectives.

To reduce the possibility of unwanted limitations, the interviewers created a comfortable environment for participants, encouraging open and honest communication. This was achieved by establishing ground rules at the beginning of the sessions that promoted respectful listening and turn-taking and helped manage dominant personalities. The interviewers assured the participants that every voice was valuable and would be heard, thereby setting a cooperative tone during the interviews.

Results

Language Proficiency Test

It was hypothesized that the length of exposure of L2 has an impact on language attrition dynamics in international school students. The statistical analysis was implemented to analyze data collected through the language proficiency test. The test was conducted with 200 high school students with different lengths of exposure to the second language: Group 1 had been

studying in international schools since pre-school, while Group 2 transferred to an international school setting after completing primary school.

Results of the Groups Comparison

The mean values for Group 2 were statistically significantly higher than the mean values for Group 1 across all the measurements – listening (*M*=2.1, *SD*=0.58 vs. *M*=1.6, *SD*=1.12, respectively), grammar (*M*=6.2, *SD*=1.30 vs. *M*=5.4, *SD*=1.50, respectively), lexis (*M*=4.4, *SD*=0.80 vs. *M*=3.9, *SD*=0.54, respectively), reading (*M*=4.6, *SD*=0.92 vs. *M*=2.88, *SD*=1.32, respectively), and writing (*M*=3.58, *SD*=1.45 vs. *M*=1.72, *SD*=0.83, respectively) (Table 1). These findings support the idea that Group 2 performed better across all language aspects than Group 1. Therefore, all individual hypotheses stating that "both groups are equally proficient in listening/grammar/lexis/reading/writing" were necessarily rejected.

Table 1

Group Statistics by Language Background Groups – Listening, Grammar, Lexis, Reading, and Writing

	Language Background 1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Listening TOTAL	After primary	100	2.15	.575	.058
	Pre-school	100	1.80	1.119	.112
Grammar TOTAL	After primary	100	6.20	1.295	.1295
	Pre-school	100	5.40	1.504	.1504
Lexis TOTAL	After primary	100	4.40	0.804	.0804
	Pre-school	100	3.90	0.541	.0541
Reading TOTAL	After primary	100	4.60	0.921	.0921
	Pre-school	100	2.88	1.328	.1328
Writing TOTAL	After primary	100	3.58	1.45	.145
	Pre-school	100	1.72	0.83	.083

An independent T-test was conducted to determine whether Group 2 demonstrated different performance across specific language proficiencies, consisting of listening (S5 Q15), grammar (S5 Q11), lexis (S5 Q10), reading (S5 Q13), and writing (S5 Q14) than Group 1. Results of the test revealed that the groups were statistically significantly different across all measured components (Table 2).

- Listening $t(148)=2.78$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.60].
- Grammar $t(198)=4.03$, $p>0.05$, 95% CI = [0.41, 1.12]
- Lexis $t(173)=5.16$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI = [0.31, 0.69]
- Reading $t(176)=10.1$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI = [1.40, 2.04]
- Writing $t(158)=11.13$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI = [1.53, 2.19]

Table 2

Listening, Grammar, Lexis, Reading, and Writing – Independent Samples Test by Language Background Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	Lower	Upper
Listen. TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	52.17	.000	2.78	198	.006	.35	.126	.10	.60
	Equal variances not assumed			2.78	147.88	.006	.35	.126	.10	.60
Gram. TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	1.45	.230	4.03	198	.000	.80	.198	.409	1.191
	Equal variances not assumed			4.03	193.71	.000	.80	.198	.409	1.191
Lexis TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	45.50	.000	5.16	198	.000	.50	.097	.309	.691
	Equal variances not assumed			5.16	173.43	.000	.50	.097	.309	.691
Reading TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	13.85	.000	10.64	198	.000	1.72	.162	1.401	2.039
	Equal variances not assumed			10.64	176.36	.000	1.72	.162	1.401	2.039
Writing TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	27.59	.000	11.13	198	.000	1.86	.167	1.53	2.190
	Equal variances not assumed			11.13	157.51	.000	1.86	.167	1.53	2.190

E-Survey

The second research question looked at the extent to which such factors as language proficiency, language use, language of emotions and thoughts, and language preference

contributed to the observed differences in L1 attrition between the two groups of students. Table 3 documents group statistics by groups with different language background.

Table 3

Language Proficiency in L1 – Group Statistics by Language Background Groups

	Language Background 1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Language Proficiency 1	No	100	2.10	.948	.095
	Yes	100	1.60	.667	.067

Table 4

Language Proficiency (Lang. Prof.) in L1 Independent Samples Test by Language Background Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	Lower	Upper
Lang. Prof. 1	Equal variances assumed	4.594	.033	4.31	198	.00	.050	.116	.27	.73
	Equal variances not assumed			4.31	198.6	.00	.050	.116	.27	.73

An independent T-test was conducted to determine whether Group 2 demonstrated better or worse language proficiency in the L1 (as measured by S3 Q5) than Group 1. Results of the test indicated that the groups were statistically significantly different, $t(198)=4.31$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI = [0.27, 0.73] (Table 4[1]). The mean for Group 1 ($M=2.1$, $SD=0.95$) was statistically significantly greater than mean for Group 2 ($M=1.6$, $SD=0.67$) (Table 3). These findings did not support the idea that Group 1 is more proficient in L1 than the other group. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that "both groups are equally proficient in L1" was rejected.

[1] See "Equal variances not assumed" row as Levene's Test for equality of variances is found to be significant ($p<0.05$), which indicates that the hypothesis that two samples have approximately equal variances should be rejected.

Table 5

Language Proficiency in L2 – Group Statistics by Language Background Groups

	Language Background 1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Language Proficiency 2	No	100	4.40	.6667	.06667
	Yes	100	4.50	.6742	.06742

Table 6

Language Proficiency in L2 Independent Samples Test by Language Background Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	Lower	Upper
Lang. Prof. 1	Equal variances assumed	.00	1.00	-1.06	198	.293	-.100	.095	-.287	.087
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.06	197.97	.293	-.100	.095	-.287	.087

A separate independent T-test was conducted to determine whether Group 2 demonstrated better (or worse) language proficiency in L2 (as measured by S3 Q6) than Group 1. Levene's Test for equality of variances was found to be insignificant ($p>0.05$), which indicated that that "two samples have approximately equal variances" hypothesis was not disallowed. The mean for Group 2 (M=4.50, SD=0.674) was greater than the mean for Group 1 (M=4.40, SD=0.667) (Table 5). However, the test results showed that this difference was found to be statistically insignificant, $t(198)$=-1.06, p=1.00, 95% CI = [-0.29, 0.09] (Table 6).These findings did not support the idea that the groups with different language backgrounds demonstrated divergent L2 proficiency. In other words, the hypothesis that "students with and without language background are equally proficient in L2" was not negated.

To test the hypothesis relating to the impact of various aspects of language such as skills, situations, emotions, and preferences for communication on the proficiency in L1, the examiners estimated different versions of the following ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equation.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{LangProf1} = \alpha &+ \beta 1\,(\text{Age}) + \beta 2\,(\text{Gender}) + \beta 3\,(\text{LangBack1}) \\ &+ \beta 4\,(\text{LangBack2}) + \beta 5\,(\text{LangSkill}) + \beta 6\,(\text{Emo}) \\ &+ \beta 7\,(\text{Thought}) + \beta 8\,(\text{Pref}) + \varepsilon\end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), the dependent variable (LangProf1) indicated the degree of proficiency in L1 (S3 Q5). Greater LangProf1 variable represented student's higher proficiency in L1.

The main independent variables are (Lang. Skill), (Emo), (Thought) and (Pref). These ordinal variables respectively demonstrated the degree to which students experienced decrease in language skills, the language they typically used when they were emotional or stressed, the primary language in which they thought and planned their thoughts, and preference for communication with family and friends. Students responded to a number of questions in each of these categories using a Likert Scale where 1 represented always using L1, and 5 represented always using English. The variables were then calculated using the arithmetic mean of the responses given for each category. In addition, our regression equation included student age (Age), gender (Gender) and language background (Lang. Back.) as control variables.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Lang. Prof. 1	1.85	.855	200
Age	15.55	.499	200
Gender	.50	.501	200
Lang. Back. 1	1.50	.501	200
Lang. Back. 2	1.50	.501	200
Lang. Skill	3.85	.636	200
Emo	3.63	.754	200
Thought	4.22	.800	200
Pref.	3.68	.858	200

Table 7 documents the descriptive statistics for the dependent, main variables of interests as well as the control variables used in the study. It reports rather low language proficiency in L1 (*M=1.85, SD=0.855*). The average values for the Lang. Skill, Emo, Thought, and Pref. variables, on the contrary, are rather high – *M=3.85, M=3.63, M=4.22, and M=3.68,* respectively.

Results of the Regression Analysis

Table 8

Correlation Matrix[a]

#		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Lang. Prof. 1	1.000							
2	Age	.194	1.000						
3	Gender	-.176	-.503	1.000					
4	Lang. Back. 1	-.293	-.101	.200	-1.000				
5	Lang. Skill	-.534	-.161	.236	.683	1.000			
6	Emo	-.683	-.129	-.089	.355	.391	1.000		
7	Thought	-.712	-.258	.313	.272	.459	.632	1.000	
8	Pref	-.752	-.167	-.088	.321	.394	.903	.653	1.000

a. Dependent variable: Lang. Prof. 1

The correlation connecting the variables is presented in Table 8. The table showed a weak connection between the predictors for most of the variables. However, the correlation between language proficiency and the following variables was found to be statistically significant, negative and strong: language skill ($r(200)=-0.534$, $p<0.01$), emotions ($r(200)=-0.683$, $p<0.01$), thought ($r(200)=-0.712$, $p<0.01$), and preference ($r(200)=-0.752$.

Table 9

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.843[a]	.710	.700	.46851	1.645

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pref., Gender, Lang. Back., Age, Lang. Skill, Thought, Emo

b. Dependent Variable: Lang. Pref. 1

Altogether this set of selected variables predicted approximately 70% of the variance on the language proficiency, whereas the remaining 30% was predictable from other variables. Durbin-Watson coefficients is within acceptable range and is equal to 1.65 (Table 9) and analysis of variance demonstrated that variance in general is statistically significantly associated with these variables taken altogether ($p<0.01$).

A multivariate regression was conducted to examine if proficiency in L1 was impacted by the degree to which students experienced decrease in language skills, the language they typically use when they are emotional or stressed, the primary language in which they think and plan their thoughts, preference for communication with family and friends in English. Table 11 documents the results of the regression analysis. As hypothesized, significant negative coefficient estimates of language skills and preference for English in communication reported are (p-value<0.001). Standardized beta coefficients are equal to - 0.311 and -0.595,

respectively. Similarly, language used while thinking was found to negatively statistically significantly ($p<0.05$) predict the language proficiency in L1. Standardized beta is equal to -0.213. The bootstrapped 95% Confidence Interval (CI) for the slope to predict the language proficiency in L1 from thinking in English ranges from -0.368 to -0.096; thus, for each unit of increase of thinking in English, proficiency in L1 is reduced by about 0.096 to 0.36 points. This aligns with Dewaele's findings (2004) which state that the use of L1 in "inner speech and mental calculations" is influenced to the same extent by perceived L1 attrition as it is in spoken expression (Dewaele, 2004, p. 99). The range of negative impact of language skills [95% CI -0.572; -0.265] and from preferences to communicate in English [95% CI -0.781; -0.404] on the proficiency in L1 was even greater. This indicates that students who prefer to communicate in English were particularly less proficient in their L1. The Impact of Emotions on language proficiency was found to be statistically insignificant. Among all the control variables, gender and language background were found to be statistically significantly ($p<0.05$) predict the proficiency in L1. The regression equation for predicting the proficiency in L1 is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{LangProf1} = 7.749 - 0.157(\text{Gender}) + 0.185(\text{LangBack}) - 0.311(\text{LangSkill}) \\ - 0.213(\text{Thought}) - 0.595(\text{Pref}) + \varepsilon\end{aligned}$$

Table 10 documents the results of the regression analysis. As hypothesized, significant negative coefficient estimates of language skills and preference for English in communication reported are (p-value<0.001).

Table 10

Language Proficiency in L1 – Coefficients

Variable	Model (3)
CONSTANT	7. 749***
	(6.073)
Age	-0.068
	(-1.448)
Gender	-0.157**
	(-2.919)
Lang. Back.	0.185**
	(3.347)
Lang. Skill	-0.311***
	(-5.378)
Emo	0.021
	(0.229)
Thought	-0.213**
	(-3.426)

Pref.	-0.595*** (-6.200)
Observations	200
F-Value	67.267
R-Square	0.71

Note: The table reports the baseline results. The t-values based on the heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors are presented in parentheses. The outcome variable is Lang. Prof. 1 (Language Proficiency in L1). The OLS regression is used. The symbols ∗, ∗∗, ∗∗∗ correspond to p-value<0.1, p-value<0.05, p-value<0.01, respectively. All variables are listed in the earlier section and defined in detail in the methodology section.

Focus Group Interviews

The study examined the extent to which language attrition in international school students correlated with their reported sense of cultural identity shift or change, in alignment with Berry's acculturation model. Additionally, the study explored the suggested strategies or interventions to mitigate the potential cultural identity shift associated with language attrition in an international school context. Grounded theory encapsulated the coding procedures, which encompassed the retrieval of open, axial, and selective codes (Table 11) retrieved from both interviews. These findings were then integrated into the grounded theory framework, highlighting a central concept referred to as *Cultural Shift*.

Table 11
Coding Process

Open codes	Axial codes	Core codes
International stream	International school	Length of L2 exposure
Mixture of cultures		
National curriculum	National curriculum	
Support from school	Support from school	
Support from home	Support from home	Support from home
Celebrations	Customs and traditions	
Traditions		
L1	L1	Language attrition
L2	L2	
Communication with family	Communication	
Communication with friends		
Language preference	Language preference	
Cultural identity	Culture shift	Culture shift
Culture shift		
Globalization	Globalization	
Society		
History		
Music	Cultural aspects	
Values		
Ethnicity		
Culture		
Literature		
Necessity	Perceptions	Suggestions and perceptions
Motivation		
Attitude		
Recommendations	Recommendations	

The analysis of the transcribed interviews started with retrieving the open codes via MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2021). The open codes included comments on the preferences for the use of L2 while conversing with friends and the forced use of L1 while communicating with family members and friends who do not know English. Most of the students argued that studying in an international school made them switch to using their L1 daily which resulted in their thinking in L2, which they also referred to as second mother tongue in some cases. Additionally, the participants said that their schools are a melting pot of cultures which gave them exposure to a "variety of cultures, customs, and traditions".

Against the background of the dynamic process of language attrition, the motivation towards the native language decreased thus shifting the attitudes towards native culture. The students

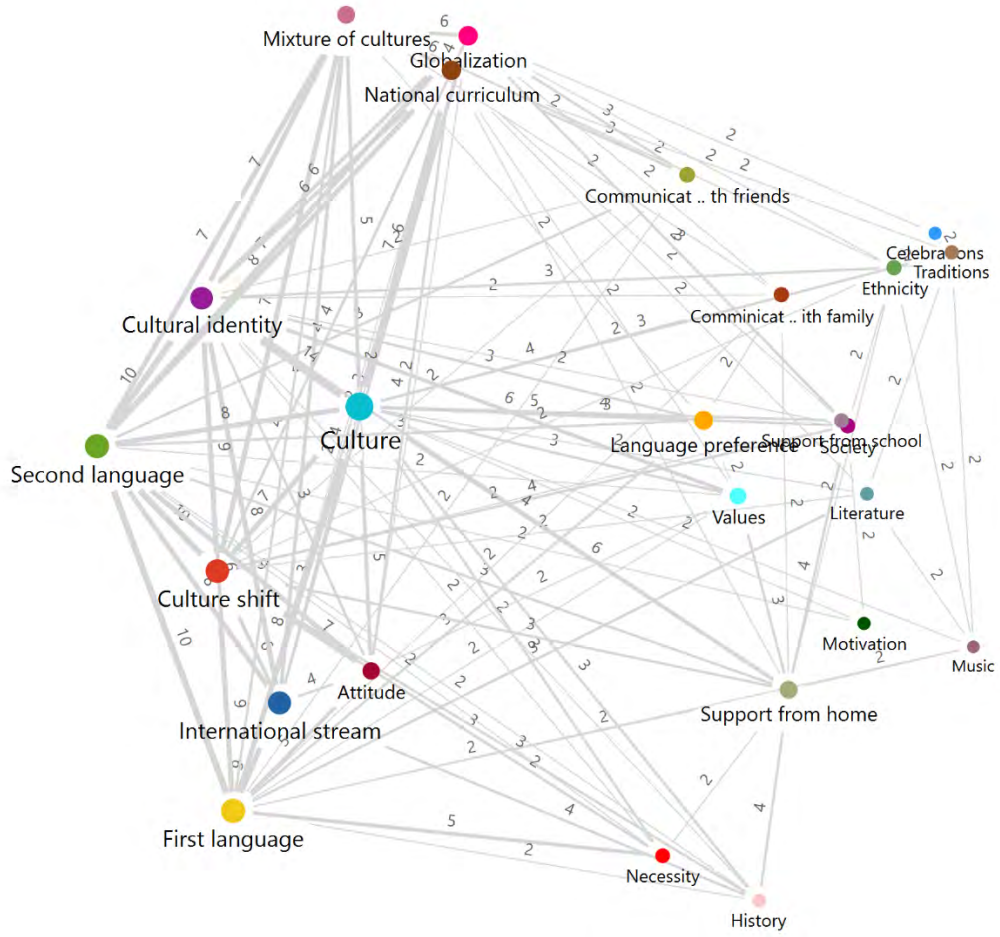
mentioned the tendency to read literature in English and listen to foreign songs as understanding "complicated texts in Azerbaijani now takes a lot of time and effort". Their cultural values were affected by globalization, and the shift in cultural identity was becoming more evident regardless of the cultural background and ethnicity. As one of the students responded, "I feel I belong to Northern American culture" even though the student is of Azerbaijani origin and does not have any ancestors from Northern America.

Following a thorough review of the transcribed interviews, an additional code that was initially overlooked was identified. The newly identified code, labeled *Support from home*, did not directly correspond to the research question. Nevertheless, its correlation with other codes and the frequency of its occurrence in the interviews underscored its significance.

The further analysis of the open codes and derivation of the connections among them facilitated their integration into axial codes: *International school, National curriculum, Support from school, Support from home, Customs and traditions, L1, L2, Communication, Language preference, Culture shift, Globalization, Cultural aspects, Perceptions,* and *Recommendations*. Regarding recommendations concerning the retention of the native language and culture, the participants reported that despite the quality of L1 teaching in their school, they considered the amount of L1 input to be insufficient to develop proficiency. However, the students also commented that their current level of L1 proficiency is adequate for understanding and being understood, and, thus, they are reluctant to spend their time on more than two classes of their native language a week. Furthermore, this lack of enthusiasm extended to their motivation to learn more about their native culture, as most of the students were inclined to study abroad and dismissed the need to know much about cultural aspects of their native culture. Some students suggested that it could be beneficial for their school community to promote national values through extra-curricular activities and field trips while avoiding overloading the existing curriculum.

Culture shift, Length of L2 exposure, Language attrition, Support from home, and *Suggestions and perceptions* were further synthesized into overarching core codes based on the patterns and relationships of the axial codes (Figure 3). The core codes discussed interactions that contribute to language and culture shifts in educational settings.

Figure 3
Code Map



The core concept, *Culture shift*, represented a "conceptual restructuring of cultural values" (Yilmaz, 2019, p.313) and gradual assimilation into the host culture. *Length of L2 exposure* denoted the duration of the excessive L2 input and its impact on *Language Attrition* which in its turn contributed to the culture shift. *Support from home* which was not initially considered appeared to be a crucial factor, as many of the participants stated that the role of the family in instilling local culture values was crucial in retaining a positive attitude and shaping native culture identity. The final component, *Suggestions and Perceptions*, provided insights into participants' views on strategies for diminishing culture shift and preserving native language and identity. The results highlight the complex relationship among language skills, cultural identity, and environmental factors, demonstrating that language exposure and support from families are key in molding cultural identity.

Discussion

The language tests' disclosure of significant discrepancies between the two groups provided a deep understanding of the mechanisms of language exposure and attrition, thereby confirming the first hypothesis (H1). The exceptional performance of Group 2 across various linguistic

domains not only underscored the complexity of bilingual education but also affirmed the hypothesis by demonstrating the tangible impact of prolonged L2 exposure on language proficiency, echoing Köpke's (2004) and Schmid's (2011) observations on bilingual education's complex balance. This balance involved the gains in L2 acquisition potentially coming at the expense of L1 proficiency, especially in contexts where L1 received inadequate reinforcement (Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2002). In exploring the specific language domains where Group 2 exhibited substantial linguistic benefits, their proficiency in grammar and vocabulary aligned with findings from Gallo et al. (2021), suggesting that deep immersion in L2 fosters a subtle grasp of grammatical structures and a wider lexical range. However, this enhanced proficiency in L2 underscored a possible trade-off, possibly leading to the attrition of L1-specific structures and vocabulary, a phenomenon previously documented by Schmid (2011) and Köpke & Schmid (2004).

The e-survey findings complement the language test outcomes by providing a subjective lens through which to view the interaction of language maintenance and attrition. The higher L1 proficiency reported by Group 1, juxtaposed with their L2 exposure, highlights a crucial equilibrium between preserving one's native language while acquiring a new one. This finding aligns with Yilmaz's (2019) study, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance to support dual language proficiency.

In addressing the research questions, the e-survey provided a detailed perspective on how students see their own language skills and the external elements they consider to be influential in their language growth. For example, students' insights into the role of environmental factors, such as the language spoken at home or the predominance of L2 in their immediate surroundings, provided valuable context for interpreting their language test performances, resonating with the discussions by Schmid and Cherciov (2019) and reinforcing the complexity highlighted by Kubota et al. (2020) regarding language proficiency's interaction with external factors. These insights underscored the complex nature of language proficiency, where external factors like societal language norms and internal factors like personal motivation and attitudes toward each language converge to shape individual linguistic trajectories, as discussed by Fitzsimons (2019).

Moreover, the e-survey findings about the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of language attrition align with the quantitative data, highlighting the complexity of navigating dual language proficiency. These narratives provide a personal dimension to the quantitative findings, aligning with Berry's (1997, 2005) acculturation model and reinforcing the interconnected themes of cultural identity and language attrition explored by Yilmaz (2019).
Qualitative insights from the focus group interviews add another layer of depth, portraying the personal and collective narratives of cultural shift and language attrition. The thematic emergence of *Cultural Shift* speaks directly to the second hypothesis (H2). The theme illustrates how individuals in international schools undergo transformations in their cultural values and identity, a process intricately linked to their linguistic experiences and mirroring broader cultural dynamics explored by Kashima et al. (2019). The students' experiences offered vivid illustrations of how language attrition and acquisition are experienced on a personal level,

providing a human context to the quantitative findings. The causal relationships within the theoretical framework (Figure 4) illustrated a sequential process of culture shift in international school environments.

Figure 4
Theoretical Framework

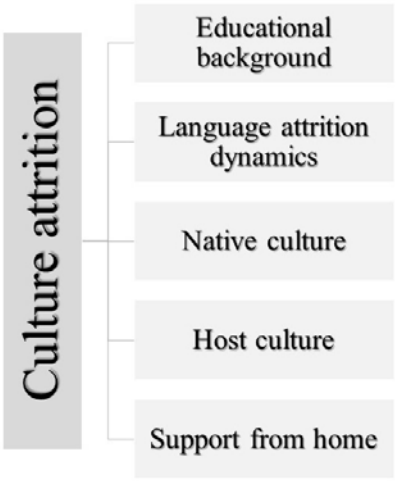
Consequently, the thematic analysis, (Figure 5) involving the in-depth analysis of the codes emerged during the grounded theory process and theoretical framework, enabled the retrieval of *Culture Attrition* through which individuals undergo a transformation in their cultural values and identity as an overarching theme. The exploration of *Educational Background* and *Language Attrition Dynamics* offered a direct response to the research question regarding the influence of academic experiences on language attrition. The first theme, *Educational Background*, unveiled the influence of academic experiences on *Culture Attrition*, describing how educational environments contribute to the reshaping of cultural perspectives. *Language Attrition Dynamics*, the second theme, examined the relationship between the duration of L2 exposure and the erosion of language proficiency, providing a critical link amid linguistic changes and the broader cultural shift observed.

Native Culture and *Host Culture*, as distinct yet interconnected themes, elucidated the conflict concerning individuals' original cultural identity and their assimilation into the host culture, highlighting the transformative nature of cultural values and practices. According to Berry's model, the native culture refers to the culture of the individual or group before the acculturation process. It is the culture associated with one's heritage, origin, or background. The host culture, on the other hand, refers to the culture of the larger society or the dominant cultural group within which individuals or groups find themselves when experiencing acculturation. It

represents the culture of the country or community where individuals are residing or interacting (Berry, 2005).

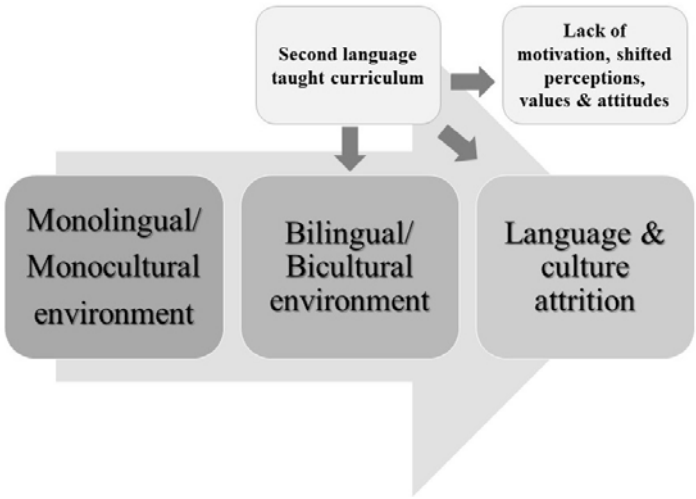
Support from Home emerged as a crucial theme, emphasizing familial influence in mitigating *Culture Attrition*, a factor that both Kubota et al. (2020) and Yan et al. (2023) acknowledge as significant in preserving language and cultural values. Hence, based on the theoretical framework and thematic analysis, it seems apparent that cultural attrition is a gradual degradation of native cultural values and reshaping of cultural identity perception furthered by sociolinguistic backgrounds and societal contexts.

Figure 5
Thematic Analysis



The research findings underscored a compelling connection linking the acculturation experiences of students in international schools and their placement within the assimilation quadrant of Berry's acculturation model. As students started their educational journey in an international school, they gradually shifted from monolingual environments in their households to becoming bilingual speakers. However, in these educational settings, where exposure to the host culture is prevalent, students exhibited a tendency toward adopting the cultural norms and language of the host society while concurrently undergoing attrition in their native culture and language (Berry, 2005; Yilmaz, 2019). The assimilation orientation was evident as these students actively engaged in adopting the customs and language of the dominant culture, often leading to a lack of motivation in developing their native language and the gradual erosion of their ties to their native cultural identity and language proficiency (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Language and Culture Attrition Dynamics



Language and culture attrition dynamics reflect a significant aspect of the acculturation process, emphasizing the impact of extensive exposure to the host language and culture within the context of international schools. Understanding these dynamics is pivotal for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance the cultural and linguistic well-being of students in international school environments and is encouraged to be further investigated.

Recommendations

Given the research findings on language attrition and cultural identity dynamics in international schools in Azerbaijan, it is critical to provide a number of suggestions that can inform policy development, future educational methodologies, and research endeavors. The study underscored the importance of a holistic approach to language education in international settings, advocating for enhanced support for students' native languages alongside the acquisition of a second language. Schools should consider integrating comprehensive language support programs that not only reinforce students' proficiency in their native language but also deepen their cultural connections (Köpke & Schmid, 2004; Schmid, 2011). Moreover, the adoption of practices that celebrate and reinforce cultural diversity within schools is essential. Initiatives that encourage students to engage with their cultural heritage can foster a more inclusive and enriching learning environment, supporting the dual goals of language retention and cultural identity preservation (Berry, 2005; Yilmaz, 2019).

On the policy front, there is a clear need for educational policies that acknowledge and address the dual objectives of language acquisition and cultural identity maintenance. Policies that equip international schools with the necessary resources and guidance to support students' linguistic and cultural needs will be instrumental in shaping a more balanced and culturally sensitive educational landscape (Alasgarova, 2023).

Future studies should aim to explore the longitudinal impacts of L2 language exposure on cultural identity, providing a richer understanding of how educational environments influence students' linguistic and cultural development over time. Such research is vital for crafting more informed and effective educational strategies and policies.

Conclusion

In this study, the impact of language exposure and proficiency on language attrition dynamics in international school students was investigated. The research encompassed quantitative analysis through the language proficiency test and e-survey, as well as qualitative insights obtained through focus group interviews. The findings discuss several key aspects, contributing to an understanding of language and culture attrition dynamics in international school students.

Language proficiency tests showed marked differences between two groups distinguished by their L2 exposure duration (Berry, 2005). Group 2, with more extended exposure, demonstrated higher proficiency in listening, grammar, lexis, reading, and writing than Group 1. Statistical methods, including independent T-tests, validated these significant differences. The e-survey explored factors affecting language attrition, such as proficiency, usage, emotional language, and preference, revealing that Group 1 had higher L1 proficiency, contrary to expectations. Regression analysis indicated that language skills, preferences, and cognitive language use profoundly affect L1 proficiency, highlighting the intricate relationship of language and cultural identity (Yilmaz, 2019).

Focus group interviews yielded insightful qualitative data, highlighting the intricacies of language and cultural attrition. Through grounded theory, a central concept emerged: *Cultural Shift*, which included shifts in language use, cultural values, and identity perceptions influenced by factors like L2 exposure duration, home support, and personal views. Theoretical and thematic analyses further clarified how educational experiences and language attrition dynamics interact, as well as the tensions involving native and host cultures.

While this research significantly added to an enhanced understanding of language and culture attrition in international school students, several considerations should be acknowledged. The findings are context-specific, and caution is warranted in generalizing them to diverse educational settings and cultural contexts. The reliance on self-reported data, inherent in surveys and interviews, introduces the potential for response bias, suggesting that future research could benefit from incorporating objective measures of language proficiency. Additionally, the design of the study did not account for the possible influence of teachers' language proficiency and attitudes towards L1 and L2, which could have impacted the students' language attrition and cultural identity experiences. This oversight suggests that future research should consider the broader educational ecosystem, including educators' roles in shaping language and cultural dynamics. The study provides a snapshot of language and culture attrition dynamics, and the temporal aspects of these phenomena could be more comprehensively explored through longitudinal studies. In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights to the field, and its recommendations seek to guide educational practices and policies fostering

linguistic and cultural diversity in international educational environments. Nevertheless, further research is encouraged to investigate the long-term effects of language exposure on cultural identity and linguistic proficiency.

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Enriching Students' Cross-Cultural and Multilingual Communication: The Serious Play Approach Utilizing Playmobil Pro Figures

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Abstract

Playmobil pro is an innovative modelling kit for adults that encourages creative thinking in the university/workplace. International multilingual students often disclose that they have little opportunity to develop their intercultural awareness, and cross-cultural and multilingual communicative competencies while engaging in meaningful activities that foster sustainable content and language learning. In the present study, 35 students were involved in two Playmobil pro workshops. They worked individually to present themselves to their peers, referring to their cultural background. They then worked in groups to explore intercultural differences among people working for organizations operating in the UK and another country of their choice and offer recommendations to help organizations avoid cross-cultural conflicts. The aim was to actively engage students to work on their final assignment and develop their intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communicative skills. This case study used a qualitative design and explored students' attitudes by asking them to write a short anonymous report at the end of the implementation and provide anonymous feedback via Mentimeter after each workshop. The lecturer also kept notes in the form of a diary during this implementation. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which revealed that Playmobil pro facilitated intercultural communication in the post-COVID-19 era as students seemed to be unwilling to work with their peers in face-to-face classes, possibly suffering from trauma. However, learners confessed that they needed more time, support, and artefacts to fully present their ideas and thoughts. Recommendations for the effective implementation of Playmobil pro with multilingual students will be offered.

Keywords: Playmobil pro, post-COVID-19 student recovery, multilingual students, content and language learning attitudes, cross-lingual communication, intercultural awareness

Game-based learning is used to engage students in the learning process, increase their bonding and interaction (Eutsler, 2021), and stretch their retention of the knowledge and skills (Tavares, 2022) received beyond a single often repetitive teacher-led lecture. Serious Games (SG), for example Lego as a Serious Play (LSP) and Playmobil pro, which involve the use of learning strategies such as role play and storytelling, enhance learning and behaviour change through amusement and are employed in various fields, including Higher Education (HE), health, language education, business, and even the army and aviation, in order to help future aviation managers develop a full understanding of the complex nature of aviation emergency response and crisis management (Griggs et al., 2019; Ishaq et al., 2022). In order to use gamification in HE successfully, educators need to understand how game elements can drive students' content and language learning behaviours so that they may improve their academic performance (Eltahir et al., 2021). The use of Playmobil pro in HE is in its infancy. There are only a handful of cases of published research in which Playmobil pro has been used in: (a) teacher education both undergraduate and postgraduate (Marfisi-Schottman et al., 2022; Souliotou, 2021), (b) computing (Nass Bauer & Trapp, 2019), (c) arts (Souliotou, 2021), (d) people and change management (Griehsel & Riester-Gnädinger, 2019), (e) organizational management (Hauser & Amann, 2023), (f) language education (Clausen & Hoinkes, 2022), and (g) crisis management (Lefevre-Scelles et al., 2022).

This article explores the use of Playmobil pro in a business and management school in the UK. It was used to develop international undergraduate students' intercultural awareness and promote cross-cultural communication in terms of a Human Resource Management (HRM) course. While using Playmobil pro, students were encouraged to use a multilingual approach (allowing them to use words and short phrases in their native languages) while communicating informally in their groups. This allowed them to learn various terms in other languages and develop a better understanding of their peers' heritage languages and cultural backgrounds. Playmobil pro aspired to improve undergraduate students' learning attitudes and facilitate multilingual and multicultural student interaction in the post-COVID-19 era as students seemed hesitant to engage in face-to-face collaboration and interplay after two and a half years of remote learning due to the pandemic. The learners had not been involved in game-based learning of any kind previously and were quite uncertain about participating in this intervention as working with Playmobil pro figures seemed childish at first.

However, taking into consideration students' feedback, this learning intervention allowed them to reflect on their assignment, receive and provide peer support and make friends at a time when most university students felt isolated. This study also aimed to explore the value of using game-based learning to enhance students' intercultural awareness in terms of a newly designed module on international human resource management. Modules on intercultural communication are a new trend in HRM as cultural aspects are often neglected in management studies. This case study intended to determine students' attitudes towards this innovative approach, Playmobil pro, to enhance students' intercultural competencies in HE. One of the main goals of this intervention was to achieve a major increase in student motivation, engagement, interpersonal communication, empathy and academic achievement through the use of a novel game-based technique in HE (Herrera-Velasquez, 2020). This study will

potentially encourage more lecturers to experiment with Playmobil pro to develop multilingual students' intercultural skills, and thereby increase their interest in content and language learning. Playmobil pro may allow learners to develop their social skills while working on their assignments. The research questions the study intended to address were:

- What is the impact of Playmobil pro on undergraduate multilingual students' attitudes towards content and language learning?
- What are undergraduate multilingual students' perceptions of the impact of Playmobil pro workshops on the development of their intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communicative competence?

In the next section, the existing literature on game-based learning will be explored. Subsequently, the methodology of the study will be described. A discussion of the findings and implications of the study will follow. Finally, the contribution and limitations of this study and recommendations will be presented as a conclusion to this article.

Literature Review

Game-based learning has gained increasing interest among progressive-minded educators as an important driver of motivation, innovation, engagement, and productivity in educational contexts. Games are usually associated with the ludic nature of the human being (Arlt & Arlt, 2023). They are also essential and convenient tools for entertainment, recreation, and behavioural change (Hammady & Arnab, 2022). Games may offer enjoyment, structure, motivation, ego gratification, creativity, social interaction, and emotion, satisfying the human need for learning and development (Boghian et al., 2019; Stenholm et al., 2019). Recently, game-based learning has become increasingly important within formative action, promoting the "ludic epistemology" theory which intends to identify ways to encode knowledge in the form of games and how to shape the process of knowledge and skills acquisition like a process of playing (So & Seo, 2018).

The use of game-based learning relies on constructivist theories of learning (Bakan & Bakan, 2018) which promote students' active role and support the development of higher taxonomic levels of knowledge. As learning is problem-based, these games involve the development of stories, either real or fictional, in which the learner plays a role, identifies with what is happening in that fictional game world and actively resolves problems and overcomes challenges. The educator's role is to design appropriate games, by creating inspiring contexts, providing artifacts and an interesting problem to resolve or stimulate reflection. The lecturer offers suitable guidance and feedback on learners' development during the game and its outcomes. Game-based learning helps students develop appropriate mental models (Plass et al., 2020). The psycho-pedagogical use of games from the constructivist perspective also generates changes in educational practice (Rosa-Castillo et al., 2022). The educator assumes a more discrete role as his/her aim is predominantly formative, problematic, applicative, interactive, of counseling and guidance rather than lecturing.

Roos and colleagues (2004, p. 15) refer to SG as activities that "draw on the imagination, integrate cognitive, social and emotional dimensions of experience and intentionally bring the emergent benefits of play to bear on organizational challenges". Serious gaming asks students to "think with the hands through creating a model" (Roos & Victor, 1999, p. 328). It is based on the theory of tacit integration which was developed by Polanyi (1969). This maintains that students know the answers to the questions posed but are completely unaware of that. The answers emerge through playing and engaging in SG which hide amazing intuitive playful features (Argasiński & Węgrzyn, 2019). The role of SG is becoming quite prominent in companies (Larson, 2020), as they bring significant cognitive, emotional, and social benefits for the employees/learners by encouraging meaningful play often among linguistically and culturally diverse teams (McCusker, 2020).

Playmobil has raised many generations of young people, serving as an educational toy, and encouraging imaginative play, interaction, and creativity. It can engage young people for hours while they try to express their ideas and feelings and build their own world engaging in meaningful storytelling. Lately, Playmobil pro has been used by adults in professional/educational settings to support teams in prototyping, project management, and creative workshops (Rapp et al., 2019). It was created to respond to the needs of people to engage in meaningful game-based activities while working together as the introduction of playful elements in group work tends to help people achieve better results (Kasurinen & Knutas, 2018; Petelczyc et al., 2018). The Playmobil pro method is based on a combination of modelling, which relies on personal stories, as participants try to address Socratic questions working in groups and develop their problem-solving, interpersonal/intercultural communication, empathy, and negotiation skills (Goria, 2022).

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and especially business schools, which currently welcome increasing numbers of international multilingual students in the UK, can possibly gain from utilizing Playmobil pro by adding a certain playful quality to required seminars. Playmobil pro is especially good for subjects involving people, which makes it ideal for HRM (Parkin, 2023). The fun and visual set-up of Playmobil pro facilitates the fast creation of organigrams, planning and development, and the creation of teams/groups. It also helps people express themselves more easily and become more approachable as they engage in meaningful play and remember the times when they were young and devoted hours playing and creating their own fantasy worlds. Playmobil pro can thus help students overcome mental health issues, problems, and barriers they may face in their everyday life (Huen et al., 2016; Stone, 2019).

Moreover, in a progressively globalised business world, many companies operate in multicultural and multilingual contexts. In Europe, due to increased mobility and migration, the number of people from diverse backgrounds continues to increase and the significance of culturally and linguistically responsive education is becoming more prominent (Haan, J., 2022). As cultural and linguistic diversity in the UK grows, there exist crucial implications for all senior leadership teams and HE lecturers, necessitating skills and knowledge in multilingual and cross-cultural communication and intercultural awareness to enable them to deeply understand and provide for different people's needs (Han et al., 2020). Cultural diversity can

bring potential conflicts due to misunderstandings and biases associated with essential differences among students of dissimilar national backgrounds. Leaders need to develop competencies to mitigate risks arising from cross-cultural conflicts facilitating cross-lingual communication in multilingual teams and effectively managing behaviours and attitudes in multicultural and multilingual corporations (Yousof & Abousamra, 2019).

Conflicts can be further magnified due to crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, that prohibit face-to-face contact and closer collaboration. The main challenges associated with multilingual and multicultural employees and students include the following aspects: introversion, the inability to communicate in the target language, the lack of punctuality, and different facial expressions and gestures (Yanaprasart & Lüdi, 2018).

Even though the significance of intercultural and multilingual professional development is widely recognised, very few companies and HEI offer comprehensive training courses/modules in intercultural awareness and multilingual communication in the workplace/HE. Most of the time, the development of intercultural and multilingual competencies is only associated with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning although there are formal ways to assess intercultural competencies in the workplace, and there are also informal tests (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013), quizzes (Sabet et al., 2022), and group activities. Moreover, there is very little research into the development of intercultural and multilingual competencies as well as inclusion of intercultural awareness and multilingual communication topics in HE curricula (Shepherd, 2019).

This article addresses the need for professional learning development for HE students' and future professionals' intercultural awareness and cross-cultural multilingual communication by focusing on designing and developing Playmobil pro workshops. A well-designed SG, for instance Playmobil pro, provides a medium in which learners apply theories to real-world contexts (Meletiadou, 2023). Playing with Playmobil pro, students typically become more interested in the actual game, and this also increases their content and language learning outcomes (Wronowski et al., 2020). Moreover, SG's implementation in classes has indicated that they improved retention rates and encouraged creative exploration (Silva, 2019). Despite the encouraging results, little attention has been paid to the effect of the use of Playmobil pro on the development of students' intercultural and multilingual competencies (Stadler, 2022). This is the gap the researcher intends to address with this case study.

Methodology

The researcher used a qualitative methodology (Mey, 2022) and collected qualitative data, including a tutor's observations and anonymous student feedback via Mentimeter twice, immediately after each one of the two workshops, and a student report at the end of the implementation (see Table 1) in response to the research questions of the study. She used thematic analysis to analyse data from students' feedback and triangulated the data with the lecturer's observations by comparing the main themes to increase the reliability and the overall quality and significance of the study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

Table 1
Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative data
Sample: 35 students and 1 lecturer **Sources of Data:** 1. Anonymous peer feedback via Mentimeter after each workshop 2. Final student report after the implementation 3. Lecturer's observations about the workshops and students' response to the implementation
Method of analysis: Thematic analysis of students' anonymous feedback and reports. Triangulation with data from observations.
Coders: Researcher and an assistant

Thirty-five international undergraduate students (Table 2) attended a module on International Human Resource Management. This introduced them to the developing field of cross-cultural and cross-lingual management explored in relation to both international and intra-national contexts, and drawing on perspectives from social anthropology, social psychology, linguistics, organisational behaviour, and management theory. Students attended a 3-hour workshop every week for 12 weeks (one academic semester). Learners were asked to take part in an initial 3-hour Playmobil pro session in which they had to present themselves and talk about their cultural background and their aspirations for the future using Playmobil pro. Students were given about 30-45 minutes to choose the right artefacts and prepare their story working individually first and then in groups so that they could receive feedback and get to know each other. Using a multilingual approach, the lecturer encouraged students to use words and phrases from their mother tongue to help them feel more psychologically safe and enhance their oral fluency. They were then asked to share their story in class. This was used as an ice-breaking activity to allow students to get to know each other and form groups to work for their final group assignment and presentation.

Table 2
Student Demographic Characteristics

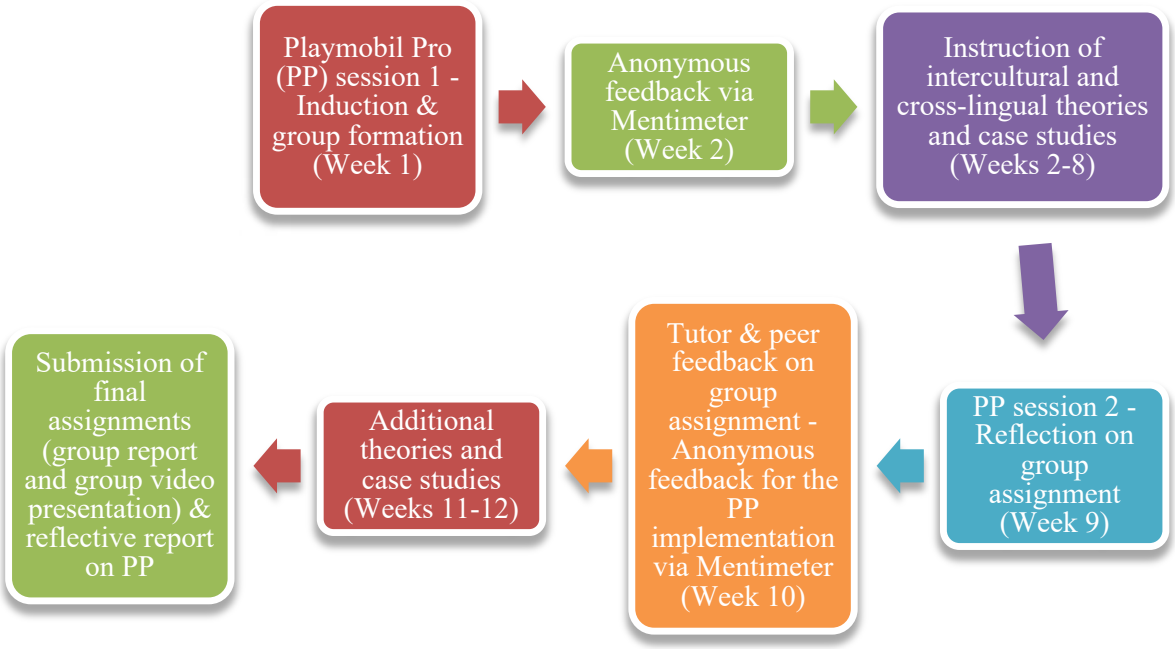
	Students	**Frequency**
Gender	Male	16
	Female	19
Age	21-30	26
	30-40	9
Ethnic background	Asian	25
	European	8
	American	2

Students were then involved in a second Playmobil session after they were taught the various intercultural and cross-lingual theories and discussed relevant case studies. In groups of 3-4 students, learners were asked to choose a country of their choice, under the guidance of their instructor, from a list of countries she provided and discuss possible 'culture clashes' and cross-lingual misunderstandings that may occur when a company coming from the UK would decide to expand in a country, for example China, which was significantly different – in terms of culture – when compared to the UK. Students had to use the relevant theories, conduct research into cross-cultural and cross-lingual issues, international human resource management practices and case studies which presented similar cultural clashes. A multilingual approach was used to enable these learners to occasionally use some terms and phrases in their mother tongue to facilitate interpersonal communication and allow students to fully understand the theories, terms in various national/cultural contexts and the instructions of their assignment.

Students were asked to provide feedback after each one of the two Playmobil Pro workshops regarding their overall experience and how it affected their content and language learning motivation, their perceived group performance in the final assignments and the development of their intercultural awareness as well as their cross-cultural and cross-lingual communicative competence (Figure 1). The investigator received ethics clearance for the study from London Metropolitan University and students provided their written informed consent. The researcher promised all learners confidentiality and anonymity. Students were assured that non-participation in the study would not affect their grades in any way. The main aim of the study was to increase students' interaction and support them as students frequently find lectures prosaic and ask for alternative approaches to content and language learning that often enhance their creativity and reflection.

Figure 1

Playmobil Pro Implementation Scheme



The lecturer also kept some notes in the form of a diary during this implementation. This allowed her to reflect on the implementation design and further support the students depending on their feedback and reactions during the two Playmobil pro workshops. During the implementation, the following rules of communication applied: (1) everyone was allowed to communicate with other students and groups; (2) language(s) of communication could be chosen freely while the language of the assignment was non-negotiable and was English; (3) participants were free to use any channels of communication for exchange of information; (4) the participants had to abide by the game agenda and the time plan. The Playmobil pro set also included unpainted Playmobil characters and accessories (Zahn, 2019). Students were asked to give meaning to their creations without any limits, and the lack of features allowed them to interpret their ideas and characters in multiple ways taking into consideration their own cultural background. Finally, this research project intended to stress the significance of: (a) drawing to expand their ideas in the brainstorming process and, (b) using hands to communicate thinking through the tactile material to assist students who could not articulate by writing, for instance neurodiverse, dyslexic or low-performing English as a Second Language students. The main aim was to promote inclusion for all students, irrespective of their background and personal characteristics, thus embracing diversity and fostering tolerance and acceptance for all students.

Findings

Impact of Playmobil Pro on Students

The investigator employed thematic analysis to examine the perceived impact of Playmobil pro on students' approaches towards content and language learning and the development of their intercultural competencies (Herzog et al., 2019). She collected qualitative data from learners (anonymous feedback and a report). Analysis of the data revealed several themes, including "enhanced collaboration and intercultural communication" and "promoted experiential, interpersonal, and deep learning" (Table 3). Data were then triangulated with the instructor's comments in her diary (Natow, 2020). Although the researcher designed the intervention and guided another lecturer who facilitated Playmobil pro workshops during her sessions, a research assistant analyzed 15% of the data collected to address researcher bias (Johnson et al., 2020).

Table 3

Impact of Playmobil Pro on Students

Themes (frequency of occurrence in students' data)	Sample Student Comments
Positive Impact	
1. Improved engagement facilitating intercultural and multilingual exchange due to positive emotions (34)	*Lectures are boring. The use of Playmobil pro allows us to interact more and learn from peers from other cultures and speak other languages. We could then better understand our differences, make friends, and feel better…*
2. Enhanced collaboration and intercultural and cross-lingual communication (33)	*I love working with my peers and exchanging information about potential causes of conflicts or misunderstandings taking into consideration various cultural and linguistic backgrounds….*
3. Developed group identity, ethical thinking, and cross-cultural empathy (31)	*We are not alone. We have to work as a group, respect each other, be fair and distribute the workload accordingly. We also need to understand that people work differently in different contexts…*
4. Promoted experiential, interpersonal, and deep learning (30)	*We learn by doing rather than reading or listening all the time. This is so invigorating. I can better understand things as I can ask many questions.*
5. Promoted a global mindset and a rule-based culture (focus on fairness) (30)	*I have to think about my peers and take into consideration their needs as well. There are rules I need to abide by. I am not alone. I have to be fair and show empathy and other awareness.*
6. Impact on development of intercultural and cross-lingual awareness and trust (29)	*I now understand that people can behave quite differently. They have different mindsets and norms. I need to be mindful, build trust and ensure we get along. We have to, as we are in the same team.*
7. Involvement in meaningful & memorable exchanges (27)	*I can now make sense of the theories as I have the time to discuss them with my friends while we are preparing our story. I will never forget the enjoyable time we had together and our final artifact and story. It was an amazing experience.*
Challenges	
8. Establish English as the working language (14)	*I do not like it when people use their own language as I cannot understand them. It is annoying. However, I also do it when I cannot express myself well in English. I guess we need to be tolerant and work our way through languages…*

9. Differences in communication styles (8)	*I hate spending hours negotiating and analysing the same thing over and over again. I prefer action rather than words and arguments…*
10. Differing degrees of cooperation and motivation (6)	*Some students are not that willing to work with me and contribute. They prefer working individually. They are selfish. This is a bit demotivating as they are unwilling to engage in real communication while we are working…*
11. Lack of time and artefacts (4)	*We need more time. This is our first time with Playmobil. We need time, support from our lecturer and possibly more Playmobil figures to fully express our ideas…*

The investigator combined findings from students' anonymous feedback and final reports regarding the Playmobil pro implementation and realised that students were initially reluctant to engage with this innovative game-based strategy due to lack of experience (Table 3, Comment 8). However, they soon became actively involved and spent considerable time developing their intercultural and cross-lingual awareness and enhancing their collaborative and interpersonal skills while demonstrating curiosity and excitement about this new learning technique (Table 3, Comment 2).

These outcomes – which were also corroborated with the instructor's comments in her diary about this challenging intervention – confirmed findings from several studies in other settings (Rapp et al., 2019). Students were demotivated by long lectures without any possibility of interacting with their peers due to lack of interpersonal exchange. Playmobil pro allowed meaningful student engagement which created positive emotions (Table 3, Comment 1). These supported an affiliation function (Carmona-Halty et al., 2021), increasing engagement and interpersonal interaction amongst group members through developing their own and others' ideas and encouraging intercultural and cross-lingual communication (Rhee, 2022). These group interactions in the post-COVID-19 era built strong group social resources, such as a sense of belonging, social and psychological support, group bonds, a feeling of intimacy, and friendship (Patulny & Bower, 2022).

Games, such as Playmobil pro, seem to create virtual worlds which promote freedom and exploration (Bowersox, 2022) as students are asked to assume various roles and identities. They provide a psychologically safe risk-free context where students can experiment without experiencing the impact of failure in real life (Parkin, 2023). On the contrary, failure is part of the learning game and allows students to reflect on their shortcomings and try out new options (Andres et al., 2024). In the context of Playmobil pro, students seem to be able to experience intercultural and cross-lingual conflicts from different points of view in safe and controlled settings and learn how to cope with them in real life (Table 3, Comment 4 and 6).

Nevertheless, students did report some communication challenges, for instance due to the use of other languages than English (Table 3, Comment 8). However, they did realize that this forms part of the intercultural and cross-lingual communication challenges multinational teams in organisation face globally. Since students wanted to work in similar contexts, they had to learn how to be flexible and work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds minimising any possibility for prolonged disruption and harnessing the benefits of diversity. Serious games seem to be particularly helpful for training. Therefore, Playmobil pro may offer an immersive and engaging context where participants 'learn by doing' often making mistakes in a controlled environment. Taking into consideration students' feedback, this trial and error-based method apparently enhances content and language learning, improves group work, the development of social skills, leadership, and cooperation.

Discussion

Culture may determine success or failure in everyday face-to-face encounters in organisations globally. People often have expectations when they enter conversations which are related to culture and language. They are frequently affected by their cultural values and linguistic backgrounds in their personal and professional lives. Moreover, individuals repeatedly apply their own cultural lens every time they interact with their colleagues and negotiate with their customers at work. Therefore, people working in multinational companies and/or culturally diverse settings, for example in the UK, need to be aware of the cultural and linguistic differences which can become a source of confusion, misunderstanding, and most importantly, conflict. Awareness of these disparities and an openness to assume different cultural perspectives are important for the development of students' intercultural competencies and the promotion of meaningful conversations based on trust, empathy, and other awareness (Table 3, Comments 2, 3 & 6). Therefore, HE lecturers can choose to cultivate students' intercultural and crosslinguistic skills through appropriate learning strategies such as Playmobil pro sessions, as indicated in this case study.

As Playmobil pro sessions require students to engage in a microcosm of the social world, with its own inclusions and exclusions, learners will have to face when they graduate, students become prepared for the negotiations they have to make to survive in diverse work settings (Vari, 2021). Moreover, taking into consideration the physiological impact of positive emotions that learners often experience (Marfisi-Schottman et al., 2022) when they engage in such sessions, as well as the impact of enjoyable play on the brain, one can safely conclude that Playmobil pro apparently relieves some of the anxiety that international multilingual learners feel when they engage in real-life face-to-face encounters promoting memorable exchanges that advance deep experiential learning (Table 3, Comments 4 &7).

During Playmobil pro sessions, students revealed that they felt optimistic about their relationships with their peers and happy about learning things in such an engaging way (Table 3, Comment 1). Therefore, one may conclude that Playmobil pro creates the urge to play and pushes the limits for multilingual students to be creative not only in social and physical behaviour, but also in intellectual and artistic behaviour (Parkin, 2023). Experiencing

playfulness, mindfulness, compassion, empathy, and hope activates the body's parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) (Zhou et al., 2019). This allows international multilingual students to open up and be more receptive to new ideas, feelings and other individuals and enhances their cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication (Moreno et al.,2019).

Playmobil pro facilitates flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and psychological safety and assists participants to gain valuable insights confirming similar previous research on LSP. These two game-based techniques seem to promote storytelling and metaphors to examine the intrinsic meanings that students try to convey (Harn & Hsiao, 2018). By completely immersing into play, students lose their sense of self and reveal their true selves, ideas and identities allowing room for deep reflection, thus advancing towards increased academic achievement (Wringley & McCusker, 2019). Other-awareness and perspective-taking are inherent in the design of Playmobil pro and facilitate developing a global mindset and setting rules ensuring fair play. This allows international students to develop valuable professional skills extremely useful for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounters. Students also revealed that the impact of the Playmobil pro sessions last longer than repetitive lectures (Table 5, Comment 7). Khasawneh and colleagues (2024) indicate that positive memories after the learning experience enhance knowledge and skill retention and increase social resources such as social support and connections amongst people, especially relatively shy international learners, which students can further develop in their professional life.

Moreover, when lecturers refer to the development of conflict management practices in students, they include a wide range of strategies, such as communication, problem solving, dealing with emotion, understanding positions, negotiation and mediation (Gorostidi et al., 2023). In HE, the challenge for educators is to prepare future employees and managers to channel cross-cultural and cross-linguistic conflicts into constructive responses (Kubicek et al., 2019). and consider them as opportunities for stimulating relations and moving towards group cohesion. Intercultural and cross-linguistic conflicts define the implicit or explicit emotional struggle or frustration between individuals from different cultures over perceived incompatible morals, values, norms, face concerns, goals, scarce resources, processes, and/or outcomes in a communication situation (Yamasaki & Prat, 2021). To help students resolve related challenges and deal with such situations, lecturers may consider exploring the different aspects and levels of intercultural and cross-lingual clashes, as well as their impact on the involved parts and on the overall classroom dynamics through SG, for instance Playmobil pro workshops. They could thus promote a situated learning approach (Wandl et al.,2019) which is embedded in the constructivist learning paradigm (Chuang, 2021). This can provide meaningful learning experiences by involving multilingual learners in authentic learning environments based on real world experiences. In such contexts, knowledge can be transformed into action competencies and support content and language learning (Table 3, Comments 4 & 7).

To sum up, various authors have showcased the significance of SG, like Playmobil pro, for educational purposes, especially in HE (Andres et al., 2024; Zahn, 2019). Playmobil pro seems to promote a learner-centred approach as students can learn at their own pace and receive

scaffolding by their peers, depending on their learning style and their individual needs as they interact in terms of the game overcoming potential challenges (Table 3, Comments 9 &10). This may further facilitate educators in HE as they often have large cohorts and significant time constraints. To sum up, learners in this case study expressed their interest in engaging in more Playmobil pro sessions as they thought they create meaningful learning and development experiences, especially in terms of intercultural training, by simulating highly interactive scenarios where students have to face and resolve real-world problems without worrying about the risks.

Conclusion

Plato was the one of the first philosophers who recognised the significance of purposeful play for learning and development (Wilkinson, 2016). The findings of this case study corroborated previous research indicating that HE lecturers should consider using innovative game-based learning tools that may support teaching by enhancing students' intercultural competencies in an entertaining and engaging way (Köroğlu & Kimsesiz, 2023). These may also enhance students' academic performance and promote student autonomy and empowerment (Westera, 2019). However, very little – if any – research exists exploring how Playmobil pro can be used in HE to develop students' intercultural and cross-linguistic skills preparing them for future professional challenges as they will most probably need to work in highly diverse multi-cultural environments.

Playmobil pro apparently promotes an active experiential approach to content and language learning that has been increasingly used in education lately as it brings significant benefits for the learners. However, despite its promise in HE, there are numerous challenges involved in developing and implementing highly effective games. Since the role of educator in developing game-based approaches that promote students' intercultural and cross-linguistic awareness is critical, more research needs to explore how educators can be supported if SG, such as Playmobil pro, are to be widely adopted in HE and become mainstream.

Recently, SG have become increasingly popular as a didactic tool in business schools to develop students' professional skills and enhance intercultural and crosslinguistic learning. Intercultural and cross-linguistic competencies – which include social, communicative, and performative skills and capabilities and are seen as key competencies of the 21st century – can be developed through SGs, like Playmobil pro. Playmobil pro involves complexity, uncertainty in decision-making process, and a relative freedom of action, but also time pressure, role conflicts and conflicts of interest which aim at an enhancement of cultural, linguistic, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural expertise. Playmobil pro seems to usher in new opportunities for developing immersive learning context where intercultural and cross-linguistic encounters and interactions are promoted, while students also practice their professional skills, for example negotiation in a risk-free environment.

Therefore, Playmobil pro may prove to be useful in HE as it can be used to develop students' cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, and inter-communication skills as learners are preparing

themselves to become managers/leaders as is the case in the current study. The aim is for future managers/leaders to hopefully internationalize their organisations, facilitating employability and competitiveness. The world can be envisioned as a diverse ensemble of cultures and languages. Viewing the world in such a manner can support companies as it promotes innovation and the consideration of various approaches for everyday challenges and simultaneously cause issues when organisations try to establish new ventures in foreign markets.

Although the present study was a small-scale case study limited in time and space and involved only 35 students in a specific business school, this implementation may be useful for educators who wish to investigate innovative strategies to help students develop their cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication skills while increasing their engagement and motivation. SG are now increasingly used in HE as lecturers try to develop students' intercultural and cross-linguistic awareness after the historic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic asking learners to engage again in face-to-face learning. Playmobil pro seems to be able to achieve a significant impact on students' motivation to learn and overall engagement in resolving intercultural and cross-linguistic challenges and developing international multilingual students' valuable professional skills. According to the literature and the findings of this study, few training or teaching methods appear to engage these students as much as SGs in HE in the post-pandemic era (de Almeida, 2023). This article sets an implementation framework for using Playmobil pro, a promising game-based technique, to enhance students' competencies in terms of cross-cultural and cross-lingual conflict management in the context of HE and develop their intercultural awareness fostering tolerance, trust, and inclusion for all students, irrespective of their linguistic or cultural background. Therefore, it prepares the global citizens of tomorrow who need to prioritise cultural and emotional intelligence over general intelligence.

International students' experience in this case study supports the view that Playmobil pro can have a positive impact on the development of students' intercultural and cross-linguistic communication as it offers psychological safety and ensures collaboration. The outcomes of this study reveal that Playmobil pro can inspire creative confidence (Dijks, 2018) and have a worthwhile effect on several areas relating to positive team dynamics and group mindset shifts including empathy, trust, perspective-taking, and the presence of a risk-free environment that promotes content and language learning.

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Adults' Perceptions of Studying English in Face-to-Face, Online, and Blended Modalities

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Abstract

Questions regarding the most effective teaching modality in foreign language instruction remain especially important for adult educators, since adult students have conflicting demands on their time and need to see the value of training. This research was centered around three cohorts of students taking courses of English of the same content and volume from the same provider. The students were university faculty and thus, of comparable demographics, and the courses were funded by the university. Over several years, and as the result of COVID-related restrictions, the courses were delivered in face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended modalities incorporating flipped classroom in the latter two. The aim of the research was to investigate the impact of a course modality on the perceived teaching effectiveness of a language course for adults. A quasi-experiment was used as a type of sequential mixed method. Relative perceived effectiveness of each modality was drawn from a combination of student evaluation of teaching (SET) and semi-structured interviews with former students who acted as both alumni and experts in education. SET comparison revealed no significant differences in results among the three modalities while interviews indicated a preference for the blended learning. At the same time, SETs of fee-paying students with comparable demographics taking similar courses at the same institution and analyzed previously showed a distinctive preference for a blended approach. That might be due to the differences in resources these two groups invested in studies: time vs time and money. The results imply that adult language educators have the flexibility to choose a modality while ensuring teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: course modality, perceived teaching effectiveness, English as an additional language, adult learners

According to UNESCO (2021), the unprecedented increase in life expectancy in the 21st century means that people will need to participate in education later in life, as their personal and professional needs change. Moreover, the demands of the changing labor market require that people constantly upgrade their skills while employed as "learning should be lifelong, life-wide, with weight and recognition given to adult education" (p. 117). At the same time, the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report that only approximately 40 per cent of adults participate in education annually and slightly below 12 per cent do so within any 4-week period. Although there is some growth in participation, its rate is insufficient to meet the demands of the labor market (Eurostat, 2023; Mavropoulos et al., 2021; OECD, 2020a).

The main reasons respondents cite as preventing them from involvement in adult education refer to the situational barriers as defined in the seminal work of Cross (1992): lack of financial resources and lack of time (OECD, 2020b), which represent the total cost of participating in education. It follows that, on the one hand, there is room for growth, and on the other hand, reducing the total cost of participation might increase the number of adults partaking in education. Delivering training via different modalities may be one of the ways to accomplish such a goal as it provides more flexibility (Ahlin, 2021).

Research into using different modes in education is mostly focused on university students (Tran, 2022; Watson et al., 2023; Webb & Doman, 2020; Willits & Brennan, 2017). However, as adult education programs are usually of short duration and cancellation costs are low, training providers need to make sure that students and employers view the training as valuable (Gacs et al., 2020; OECD, 2020a). While online methodology continues to be used even after its introduction as the emergency approach during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020), students still question its effectiveness compared to traditional face-to-face (F2F) teaching. At the same time, considering the social nature of language and language learning (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Toth & Davin, 2016), comparing students' perceptions of a language course delivered via different procedures may be useful for adult educators in general. This research aims to examine the impact of a specific style of course delivery on the adults' perceptions of the effectiveness of a language course offered F2F, online, and in the blended modality. The findings also contribute to the general understanding of the perception and use of the three approaches in adult education.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The literature review analyses publications related to students' perceptions as an indicator of teaching effectiveness. The next section briefly describes the research context. The methodology presents research questions and describes research design as well as methods of data collection. The ensuing segment presents and discusses the main findings. Finally, the conclusion, a discussion of limitations the study, and recommendations for further research are provided.

Literature Review: Students' Perceptions

Students' perceptions have been used as an instrument for improving teaching quality as well as for administrative purposes in various universities around the world (Kulik, 2001; Stroebe, 2020; Zhao et al., 2022). They are usually expressed through Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), which is administered as a survey form containing a series of questions related to a course, instructor, materials, and sometimes, facilities. Students then rate each item on a Likert scale (Likert, 1932) from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, and mean values are calculated for each item. Zhao et al. (2022) state that, although Purdue university introduced the first standardized student evaluations in 1915, they "began to use the standardized student evaluation scale to evaluate teachers' teaching, which is considered to be the beginning of the student evaluation system" (p. 1) in 1927.

Although using SETs represents an efficient way of gauging students' perceptions, it is still a controversial measure. In his meta-analysis of accepted expert opinions on student ratings, Kulik (2001) argues that researchers tend to prove that "ratings correlate to a satisfactory degree with other admittedly partial and imperfect measures of effectiveness" (p. 11). He suggests that evidence of students' learning, students' and alumni' comments, and rating by classroom observers be used in assessing teaching effectiveness. However, he admits that the prevailing opinion is that students learn more from highly rated teachers, and their comments correlate with their ratings and with those of the alumni and observers. Besides, teachers benefit from students' ratings for they "profit from the information the ratings provide" (p. 23). In their turn, Willits and Brennan (2017) demonstrate the evidence that course ratings are unrelated to students' characteristics, the level of difficulty, and the volume of work required from students, which makes them a valid indicator. At the same time, Spooren and Christiaens (2017) noted that students who believe that SETs have value tend to give higher ratings.

There are both educators and researchers who believe that education belongs to the category of services that views students as consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001; Lee & Deale, 2019). University students' opinions are shared on The RateMyProfessors.com (RMP) website which uses the style of consumer forums and customer reviews. The results of investigating the RMP data confirm the research into validity of SETs. However, investigating more than 16,800 professors on RMP, Chiu and colleagues discovered a "professor's brand" is a factor affecting students' perception (Chiu et al., 2019). They assert that "professors' working in top colleges can be regarded as a kind of brand awareness for students and that this factor might have a positive effect on perceived quality" (p. 452). The same might be said about any instructor who has worked in a well-regarded institution for a long enough time to develop "the brand". Willis and Brennan (2017) discovered that students' perception of course quality is directly correlated, among others, with teachers' behavior in class. Moreover, Lee and Deale (2019) found that professors' personalities have a deciding impact on the perceived quality of a course in their research into perceived quality of professors in tourism and hospitality education. Although considering students as customers might be arguable in higher education, it is different for adult education. Therefore, a particular type of valued professor's brand and

teachers' personalities are even more essential for adults to perceive their experience as positive.

Stroebe (2020) is much more critical in his view of using SETs though and argues that they can lead to grade inflation and poor teaching, in addition to not being valid. His argument that there is no correlation between SETs and students' learning is also corroborated by studies looking into the relationship between students' learning and professors' ranking (Uttl et al., 2017). Some other factors also impact students' ratings. Students' interest in a subject, physical attractiveness and general likeability of instructors, their minority status, and to some extent, their gender, are among those which indicate evidence of the *halo effect* (Keeley et al., 2013 as cited in Allred et al., 2022) in student ratings. In an educational setting, the *halo effect* refers to the situation "when one aspect of an instructor influences the instructor's overall rating" (Allred et al., 2022, p. 71). Experiments show that a behavioral tactic like memorizing students' names on purpose leads to higher ratings as the result of the halo effect.

Keeping in mind the challenges of adult education, students' perception of teaching and their own performance are crucial for both their learning and participation in education. However, the fact that adult students do not form long-lasting relationships with course providers may be the reason why analysis of students' perceptions is usually limited to university students and the use of SETs as the most efficient measure. This paper contributes to the research by focusing specifically on adult students taking a non-degree language course. At the same time, students' ratings must not be the only tool to gauge their perceptions. Evaluation procedures should also include open-ended questions as a part of SETs and post-evaluation procedures (Ulker, 2021) as well as opinions of alumni and experts. The students in this research are educators with experience of teaching in different modalities. Therefore, their participation in classes may be considered as professional observation. Together, these provided a basis for a comprehensive analysis of the perceived experience of adults studying English via different methodologies, which contributes to the field of adult language education and adult education in general.

Research Context

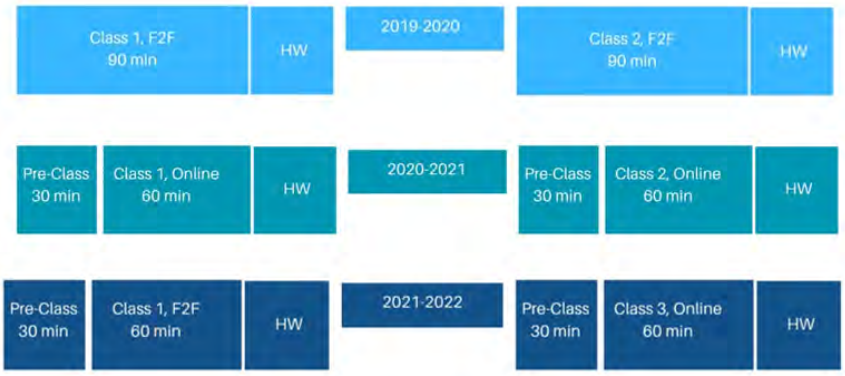
The research took place at the Riga Technical University (RTU) Riga Business School English Language Center (RBS ELC) in Latvia. RBS ELC was established in cooperation with the English Language Institute at State University of New York at Buffalo in 1991 and operated until 2023. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all instruction at RBS ELC was conducted face-to-face (F2F). However, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Latvia introduced changes in legislation (Ministru kabinets, 2020a, 2020b, 2021). As a result, course format had to be re-developed to accommodate those. After the pandemic started, the course was planned to be offered as flipped and blended: each 90-minute lesson divided into a 30-minute Pre-Class and 60-minute synchronous Class with the Class meeting once a week F2F and once a week online. However, in the second half of the 2020-2021 academic year, F2F teaching was prohibited in Latvian universities (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrīja, 2021), therefore both synchronous classes met virtually, retaining the flipped model (Chen et al., 2014;

Flipped Learning Network (FLN), 2014). Only in the 2021-2022 academic year, students had the flipped blended course.

There were three reasons to introduce the electronic component and to plan it to remain even after the restrictions on F2F teaching were lifted. Firstly, virtual teaching and learning has become an accepted communication medium for both work and private lives; therefore, a synchronous online class provides an authentic language experience. Secondly, reducing the total time needed for participating in training increases convenience for students. Besides, there is evidence that students experience lower levels of social stress in online classes compared to F2F (Lazarevic & Bentz, 2021), flipped classroom suits undergraduate students who prioritize control over their learning (Tang et al., 2020), and that more mature students adapt better to studying from home than younger undergraduates (Brachtl et al., 2023). Thirdly, introducing an asynchronous component as the Pre-Class task allows students to complete some activities at their own pace and at a convenient time while instructors can use the classroom time for interactive or challenging tasks. At the same time, the importance of student-teacher interaction and initial F2F communication (Kaiper-Marquez et al., 2020) led to the planning of the first class of the week to be F2F in the original blended format. Most of the groups had a long course of 25 weeks, but some studied more intensively, with double classes spread over 12.5 weeks. However, as the course structure does not impact students' perceptions (Ginzburg & Daniela, 2023), in this research, data from both variants were analyzed together. Figure 1 illustrates the three modalities.

Figure 1

The Three Modalities (developed by T. Ginzburg)



Note: HW stands for homework.

Instruction in all the modalities followed the same overall process. Teachers used standardized outlines developed by senior faculty and RBS ELC Director for each level. The outlines were based on selected commercially available coursebooks and served as a framework. Teachers supplemented core coursebooks with additional materials based on the needs of their students. These included printed and online materials selected, curated, or designed by teachers. Instructors also used Google Classroom to communicate with students, post assignments and supplementary materials, record grades and attendance. At the end of a course and provided

they met the criteria of attendance, participation, coursework, and tests, students received certificates of attendance.

Methodology

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of a course modality on perceived teaching effectiveness of an English as an additional language (EAL) course for adults. The following research questions (RQ) were formulated:

RQ 1: Does a modality affect students' perceptions of their experience in a course?
RQ 2: Considering that the course alumni are expert educators, what were their opinions of using different modalities in teaching and learning?

The research focused on three cohorts of adult students. The students were RTU faculty and academic staff taking courses in English as an additional language (EAL) within an EU-funded project 8.2.2.0/18/A/017 *Rīgas Tehniskās universitātes akadēmiskā personāla stiprināšana stratēģiskās specializācijas jomās* (Strengthening Academic Staff of Riga Technical University in Areas of Strategic Specialization) between 2019 and 2022. As the students were university academics, it was assumed that they all had a similarly high level of education and interests, as well as well-developed learning habits. Each cohort received a course of the same volume of 100 academic hours, the same content and core textbooks per corresponding level, and was taught by the same senior instructors. Students were placed in groups of a maximum 12 participants according to their initial level of English as defined by an internal RBS ELC placement test. In all three cohorts the instruction was organized at B1+, B2, B2+, and C1 levels according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR] (Council of Europe, 2020). Table 1 illustrates the composition of the research sample.

There were four full-time instructors working with these students, two of them native speakers, all of them qualified to teach at all levels, and all working at RBS ELC longer than ten years. While groups at C1 level were always assigned to a native speaker, allocation of other groups was based on the individual instructors' preferences.

Table 1
Research Sample

Academic Year	Modality	Number of Enrolled Students/Number of Training Groups	Gender	
			Male	Female
2019-2020	F2F	59/5	28	31
2020-2021	Online	42/4	15	30
2021-2022	Blended	67/6	32	35

Note: Gender identities were assumed based on the participants' names. The fact that they were university academics was presumed as their defining demographic characteristic in the context of this research, thus no demographic data was collected.

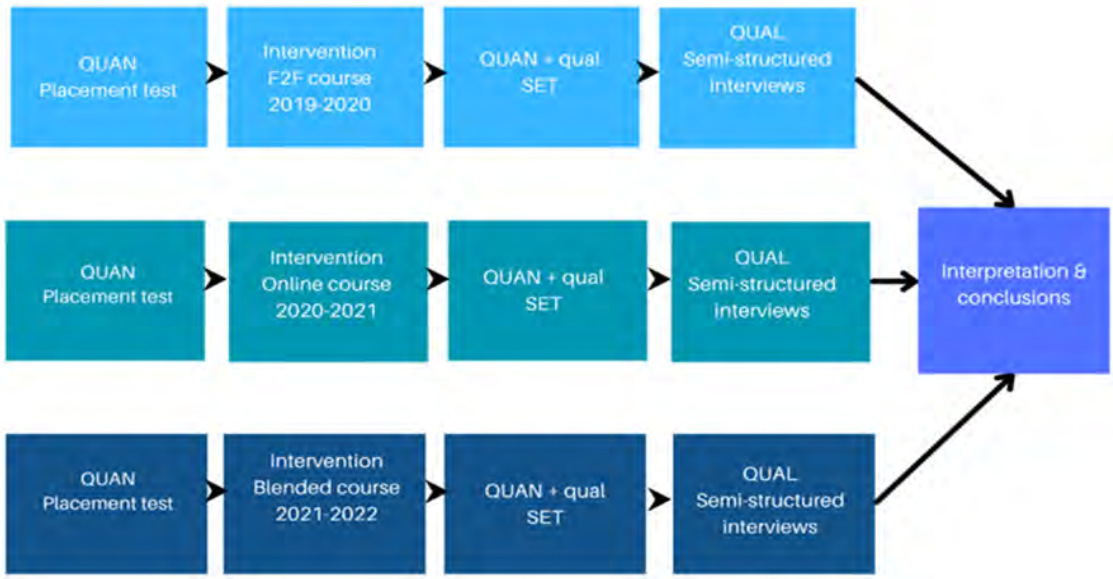
Research Design

This research was meant to inform practice, so a pragmatic paradigm (Creswell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2019) was chosen. Developed by Dewey, it has always focused on what works in practice (Burch, 2022; Dewey, 1916; Moore, 1966). According to Frey (2018), "pragmatism emphasizes that research involves decisions about which goals are most meaningful and which methods most suitable" (p.3). This is consistent with applying pluralistic methodology (Clarke & Visser, 2019; Pring, 2015), which characterizes mixed method. The use of mixed methods is increasingly gaining popularity among researchers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Greene, 2007) despite being relatively recent.

As illustrated in Figure 2, students' perceptions were investigated in a quasi-experimental design with a modality as an independent variable and using sequential mixed method research. Although students could choose whether to participate in a course, the choice of modality was defined by external factors, such as epidemiological situation and legislation. Therefore, students' assignment to a modality could not be randomized. Other factors affecting students' experience were controlled: student demographics, course content and volume, methodology, materials, as well as instructors who taught the course.

Figure 2

Research Design (developed by T. Ginzburg)



Note: QUAN stands for the quantitative method, QUAN + qual – for the mainly quantitative with some qualitative part; QUAL – for the qualitative method.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

The data for answering RQ 1 were collected through SETs, which represented standard RBS ELC final evaluation forms. They contained 26 Likert-scale questions about the instructor and various aspects of a course. The survey used values from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) rather than 1 to 5 to avoid a neutral response. Historically, a mean value of 3.33 in each

item was a threshold for a course to be considered satisfactory. Additionally, the forms contained an open-ended question about general impressions and suggestions for improvement; however, not all students wrote comments. The survey was administered anonymously on the last day of the course. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 43 students finished the course. The forms were given as hard copies, and 30 (70%) students filled them out. In the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years, the questionnaire was distributed as Google Forms. All the enrolled online students (100%) finished the course, and 34 (81%) filled out the forms. In the 2021- 2022 academic year, 65 students finished the course and 53 (81.5%) students filled out the questionnaire. Mean values for each item on the SET for each cohort were calculated and a one-way ANOVA test was performed to learn whether the differences were significant using IBM SPSS 22. When analysing the results, practical significance of potential differences (Hair Jr et al., 2010) was considered. Statistically significant differences in values could be disregarded provided the values were sufficiently above the historical threshold of 3.33. Additionally, the comments in the open-ended questions were examined for content and the main codes defined.

A series of semi-structured interviews with the course participants a year after the course ended were conducted to answer RQ 2. The invitation to participate was sent out to all the course participants via e-mail. Four students who took a F2F course and were enrolled in the blended one at the time, and five students from the online course agreed. The questions focused on the following: motivation in taking the course and whether it changed over time; general opinion of the course, its organization, and participants; whether the course had any effect on the way they use English; their opinion on what the optimal delivery system was. Although the information reached saturation after the eighth interview, all nine were conducted. Eight interviews were conducted in-person; one respondent was out of the country at the time, so that interview was conducted over Zoom. All the interviews were conducted in English, recorded, anonymized, transcribed, and the transcripts verified by the respondents. The researchers analysed the transcripts separately for the F2F/blended students and online students following the approach recommended by various researchers (Creswell, 2007; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Kvale, 1996) which includes multiple reading of transcripts, identifying initial categories and classifying them to arrive at common themes.

Ethical Considerations

RTU administration responsible for the project gave their written permission to use the SETs for the research. The permission for the interviews was obtained from the University of Latvia Ethics Commission (Nr 71- 46/19). The titles of the coursebooks used for instruction are not provided to avoid promoting the publishers.

Findings

SET Analysis

Analysis of SETs compared students' perceptions of the course delivered via three modalities and provided the answer to RQ 1. For convenience, 26 survey items were grouped into categories. Table 2 presents the first group comprising half of the 26 questions. This group of queries related specifically to instructors.

Table 2
Summary of Student Responses about the Instructor

The instructor	F2F		Online		Blended	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Speaks loudly and clearly enough to hear	3.90	.31	3.94	.24	3.85	.50
Knows the subject well	4.00	.00	4.00	.00	3.89	.47
Answers questions well	3.83	.38	3.97	.17	3.83	.51
Acts politely and respectfully, showing interest and patience	3.93	.25	3.97	.17	3.91	.37
Returns tests and homework not later than after one class	3.87	.35	3.85	.36	3.75	.55
Will provide extra help when asked	3.93	.25	3.94	.24	3.79	.53
Gives enough feedback on assignments and tests	3.93	.25	3.82	.24	3.79	.47
Begins and ends class on time	3.97	.18	3.82	.39	3.79	.50
Is well-prepared for the class	3.90	.31	3.88	.33	3.91	.45
Is interesting and enthusiastic	3.87	.35	3.97	.17	3.85	.50
Is skillful in promoting class/group discussions	3.80	.41	3.88	.33	3.75	.55
Gives all students the chance to participate	3.87	.35	3.88	.33	3.83	.51
Is one whom I'd like to have again in a future class*	3.93	.25	3.94	.24	3.67	.68

Note: *A one-way ANOVA showed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores between at least two groups (F (2, 113) = [4.170], p =.02). Tukey's HSD test for multiple comparisons revealed that the mean scores are significantly different between F2F and blended (p = .04, 95% C.I. = [.01, .51]) and between online and blended (p = .029, 95% C.I. = [.02, .51]).

The values for all three cohorts were close, which indicated that a modality did not impact how students perceived instructors. Even though the differences in mean scores for the last item were revealed as statistically significant, they were not practically significant. Larger SDs signaled that the opinions of the students in the blended course were more disparate.

The next group of questions related to teaching resources. Table 3 summarizes students' responses related to the quality of the materials employed in a particular course.

Table 3
Summary of Student Responses About the Resources

The textbook and teaching materials	F2F		Online		Blended	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Are interesting and relevant	3.37	.62	3.24	.51	3.35	.59
Are useful to the class	3.47	.57	3.41	.68	3.46	.61
Have helped me to understand the course material	3.63	.49	3.41	.66	3.45	.54
The online resources						
Are interesting and relevant	3.80	.41	3.56	.50	3.64	.52
I use them regularly	3.50	.57	3.29	.72	3.19	.83
I use them only to know homework*	2.10	1.03	2.82	.81	2.66	.83
I use extra activities posted	3.57	.50	3.26	.62	3.33	.71

Note: A one-way ANOVA showed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores between at least two groups (F (2, 113) = [5.864], p =.004). Tukey's HSD test for multiple comparisons revealed that the mean scores are significantly different between F2F and online (p = .009, 95% C.I. = [-1.28, -.15]) and between F2F and blended (p = .036, 95% C.I. = [-1.09, -.03]).

The students rated electronic resources more highly than textbooks. As textbooks are less likely to reflect the latest topics of interest, this is understandable. F2F students' admission to using online resources more often could be due to the fact that for them those were only supplementary, while for online and blended students they were part of the core materials selected or created by teachers based on what they considered the needs of the students to be. These included authentic online materials (news reports, TED-talks, YouTube videos), online learning materials available on professional websites, as well as other materials and quizzes created by teachers.

The next part of the questionnaire pertained to homework, which was assigned after every class. Table 4 represents the summary of students' responses.

Table 4
Summary of Student Responses About Homework

The homework	F2F		Online		Blended	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Has goals that are clearly explained by the instructor	3.77	.43	3.65	.49	3.68	.47
Is useful in helping me to understand the course material	3.77	.43	3.79	.41	3.68	.47

The final part of the SET, summarized in Table 5, addressed students' general impressions of the course. It was of special interest to the management, as students would only return to the course or recommend it if they saw value in the program.

Table 5
Summary of Student Responses about General Reaction to the Course

My general reaction to the course	F2F		Online		Blended	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
I learned a great deal	3.60	.50	3.62	.55	3.64	.52
The instructor was good	3.93	.25	3.97	.17	3.89	.32
I would like to continue studying at RBS ELC	3.83	.38	3.73	.52	3.70	.53
I would recommend this course to others	3.83	.38	3.91	.29	3.79	.47

While the scores for the instructors partially reflected the ones expressed in Table 2, the values for the last two items showed slightly less preference for the blended modality. The SET quantitative results as well as students' comments confirm that students' evaluation of their own progress correlated with their overall satisfaction. This confirmed the validity of using SETs as an instrument of assessing teaching effectiveness discussed in Willits and Brennan (2017).

Overall SET results demonstrated a tendency to prefer learning electronically. This contrasted perceptions of RBS ELC regular adult students, who studied in the evenings in the same academic years, in groups of the same levels of language proficiency (B1+, B2, B2+, C1), and paid a tuition fee. Past surveys of RBS ELC students, which included age, gender, level of education, and reasons for studying English (data unavailable) allowed them to be considered as demographically comparable to the students in this research. Analysis of their SETs showed a preference for the blended modality, with online rated the lowest (Ginzburg & Daniela, 2022). Considering the barriers to participation in adult education (Cross, 1992), the only resource the students in this research spent was time, as their course was funded by the project, while RBS ELC students had to invest both time and money. Thus, the students in this research could have prioritized their time and utilized the opportunity to save it that virtual teaching and learning provides. That might explain the difference in SET results. The impact of the source of funding on students' perceptions of training could be useful to investigate in future.

Comments from the Open-Ended Question

Analysis of the comments allowed them to be grouped into several codes. Table 6 lists them.

Table 6
Main Codes from Comments to SETs and Their Frequencies for Each Modality

Code	F2F (N1=52)		Online (N2=19)		Blended (N3=28)	
	n 1	%	n 2	%	n 3	%
Great instructor	14	26.92	8	42.11	9	32.14
No suggestions	5	9.62	4	21.05	5	17.86
Everything was great	13	25.00	4	21.05	2	7.14
Thank you	10	19.23	4	21.05	5	17.86
More discussions	4	7.69	1	5.26	0	0
Textbooks were outdated	3	5.77	2	10.53	1	3.57
Instructor-curated materials were good	3	5.77	1	5.26	1	3.57
More topics related to academic life	3	5.77	0	0	1	3.57
Online classes	0	0	2	10.53	2	7.14

Note: N1, N2, N3 – the total number of utterances in SETs per respective modality. n 1, n 2, n 3 – number of respective codes' appearances per modality.

Most comments students in all the modes chose to make were related to instructors. In the quotes below, instructors' names written by students are represented by the initial.

> "Great instructor! Thanks a lot!"
>
> "K. is a great lecturer, highly talented. The best explanations I have ever heard. He manages to explain logic and essence of rules and does it perfectly. Thank you!" (F2F).
> "J. is the BEST!!!!"
> "K. is fantastic teacher" (Online).
> "My teacher was Excellent!"
> "Thanks! The instructor-our dear teacher - does not need to improve anything. He is an ideal creative teacher who skilfully uses even the psychological aspect to activate and interest the group" (Blended).

This code is more frequent in a blended modality than in F2F, which is opposite to the value of "The instructor is good" in Table 5. This further confirmed that the differences in mean values were not significant.

Students' general satisfaction with their experience is further seen from "No suggestions", "Everything was great", and "Thank you" codes. Their high frequencies confirm that this opinion characterizes all three modalities. The sample utterances included: "The course was

really great! Thank you!" (F2F). "Difficult to imagine, overall, it is more than expected!" (Online). "Everything was brilliant." (Blended).

Some of the respondents wrote that they prefer materials prepared or curated by instructors to textbooks.

> "I really enjoyed video materials. The video on forms of carbon was inspiring, especially as we need to make videos in our chemistry lessons. This video was awe-inspiring" (F2F).
>
> "The textbook is a bit outdated, especially texts related to technologies."
>
> "Summaries of the various grammar topics etc. prepared by J. were great, very comprehensive and excellently formatted" (Online).
>
> "The instructor's K. examples and explanations were often more understandable, correct and useful than the topics presented in the textbook."

These corroborate quantitative results of the SETs, which show that teacher-created or -curated materials were rated higher than textbooks (see Table 3).

Some comments mentioned discussions and topics related to scientific and academic work.

> "It would be great to add more scientific topics to the course."
> "More technical English." (F2F).
> "The tough time limits do not allow us to devote enough time for discussions" (Online).
> "Some examples of daily professor life with students could be helpful" (Blended).

Some respondents emphasized the benefits of studying online.

> "Online classes is a great opportunity to save time on the transportation (getting to the class and back)." (Online).
> "In my opinion, RBS should not give up the idea of organizing classes online." (Blended).

One online student provided a more detailed opinion:

> As concerns the online format, it was indeed a great opportunity to study English during the Covid time when there aren't a lot of things happening around, so it was possible to invest more time in studying compared to the non-Covid life. … While the breakout groups seem a very good format for online interaction, sometimes I missed collaboration with the whole group. I am not sure though if and how this could be tackled online. (Online).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Conducting semi-structured interviews followed the recommendations to complement SETs with alumni' and experts' opinions (Kulik, 2001; Ulker, 2021). The responses provided information regarding using different modalities in teaching and learning which answers RQ 2. The alumni who agreed to be interviewed formed two categories in terms of their teaching experience. One out of the four people from both F2F and blended courses had fewer than 10 years of experience while three had 21 and more. Of five interviewees who took an online course, four had taught for less than 10 years, and one had 21 or more years of experience. Table 7 represents the main themes identified from the interviews.

Table 7

Themes Identified in Semi-Structured Interviews

Theme	N of times mentioned by F2F/Blended students	N of times mentioned by online students
Motivation to study		
Improving English	16	6
Socializing	0	3
Effect of the course	12	6
Effect of a teacher	23	8
Advantages of F2F	8	4
Advantages of online	10	12
Issues with online	5	5
Flipped classroom	3	5
Optimal variant (as choice)		
F2F	1	0
Online	0	1
Blended	3	3
No difference	0	1
Teaching own subject vs teaching English		
Different	4	4
Similar	5	5
Incorporating teaching methods into own practice	8	3

In the analysis of the themes below respondents are coded S1, F2F/Blended –the first interviewed student who attended the F2F and Blended courses; S1, Online – the first interviewed student from an Online course; S2, Online – the second interviewed student from an Online course and so on.

Motivation to Study

Students from all the modalities wanted to improve English:

> "I am from physical science, and this is important to characterize my expectations. I expected to understand the logic of grammar because I don't know it 100%" (S1, F2F/Blended).
> "It was to return to an English class and to try to put my grammar in place because it is a sad part of my language experience" (S4, F2F/Blended).

Others wanted more speaking practice:

> I felt that I needed, especially the speaking part. Because in my field, I know how to write good sentences because I may be writing very short and use only grammar which I know is correct. But the verbal expression... I think it's something different and separate from written parts. (S2, F2F/Blended).

> "I wanted to improve, especially grammar, I think" (S2, Online). "I wanted to improve my English because I work with foreign students and it's important to talk correctly" (S3, Online).

Socializing was another motivational factor, especially for students from an Online course.

> "The main reason was always to improve my English, but it was also a nice 'ritual' that we had lessons with nice people and just spent time together" (S4, Online).
> "I think it's normal to know English nowadays. It's like something that makes me more human if I speak in English" (S5, Online).

The fact that the course was free also played a role in their motivation:

> "Because of this unique opportunity, you have a project, you know, with everything paid" (S1, F2F/Blended).
> "Actually, it was for free. And I wanted to improve all my English. Still would like to improve." (S2, Online).

Effect of the Course

A year after the course, many respondents mentioned improvement. Some felt it especially in the areas of grammar and syntax:

> "The more I learn grammar, the more I understand 'the construction'. Previously, I didn't understand why people were speaking in a particular way. Now, it's clear to me" (S1, F2F/Blended). "I started to use idioms." (S2, F2F/Blended).

They also reported feeling more confident using English:

> "To explain my opinion directly to people I needed. … You can develop this ability and find that no one will kill you if you use some wrong words or something like that" (S2, F2F/Blended).
> "… to remember all perfect and continuous tenses. It's not possible. But now it's so interesting. Maybe I will read lectures once more. …. Well, I can speak, I speak with my friends in English now." (S3, F2F/Blended).
> "I started to think more about construction of sentences and some idioms. I still use them since these courses. Yes." (S1, Online).
> "I started to focus maybe a little bit more on grammar" (S2, Online).
> "I think my level of English has improved. … maybe I don't find writing easier now but at least I know where I should stop and think if this is correct or not" (S4, Online).
> "I started to speak more grammatically correct" (S5, Online).

Spooren and Christiaens (2017) argued that students who believe in the value of SETs tend to give higher scores. However, a year after they finished the course, the respondents' opinions confirmed SET results, which were high and similar across the modalities. This further asserts the validity of using SETs as an instrument of evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Effect of the Teacher

Although not asked specifically, all the interviewees spoke about the role of a teacher and their teachers:

> "But here's a British guy [a teacher], with perfect English, it's very nice. And he really knows the 'design' of wording and phrases" (S1, F2F/Blended).
> "He is very well-trained in pedagogical aspect and uses psychological aspect. Perfectly! He knows how… he feels our mood. Where did you find that wonderful person?" (S3, F2F/Blended).
> "Actually, the teacher was excellent, K. is native speaker. He was one of the best teachers I think, from my point of view." (S2, Online).

Some mentioned sociolinguistic learning as an added value:

> "And yes, J. was a very nice teacher. I got quite a lot interesting information about English people, and society. So, it was also interesting from that point" (S3, Online).

The SET items related to teachers received the highest values from students, and most comments in an open-ended question were also about teachers. Moreover, all the interviewees spoke about their teachers even though they were not prompted. On the one hand, that reaffirmed the central role of teachers, their personalities and behaviour students' perception of their experience as argued by Willits and Brennan (2017). On the other hand, since the

students are educators, the high scores may not have been a consequence of a halo effect as described in Allred et al. (2022). Besides, in non-formal adult education there is no incentive to inflate grades, which was a concern Lee and Deale (2019) expressed regarding using SETs in university education.

The group of themes addressing aspects of teaching via different modalities was especially important, as it provides insights into the new teaching format developed in 2020. It incorporated two main elements compared to the traditional F2F method: a flipped classroom and a synchronous online component. Even though interviews were about a language course, the respondents often spoke as educators, commenting on their experience with their own students.

Advantages of F2F

Both groups of respondents mentioned that people are social beings, and they need non-verbal clues to communicate successfully as the main argument for F2F instruction:

> Because it [language] is a social instrument, the instrument to communicate, you can't be in society without a direct contact. It is impossible. … Because you see the person, you see the emotion, you see the group. Because the group is asking questions, and so you follow the questions, you're trying to understand why this guy is asking this question (S1, F2F/Blended).

> "This face-to-face, of course, it's necessary to have. Yeah, it makes, I have to say, this contact with the teacher and the classmates stronger" (S4, F2F/Blended).
> "For the first-year students, actually, there must be more classes, classical classes. Where we are teaching them, not only the subject but we're also teaching them how to work. How, what, what it means to be a student" (S1, Online).

Advantages of Online

Both groups had experience with an online language classroom either as an entire course or in part, as was the case with a blended course. Most positive comments from F2F/Blended students were related to the absence of noise when doing group work in the Zoom breakout rooms:

> Actually, I enjoy it a lot because I can freely discuss the questions with some of other colleagues. … And there is no other noise because in class when you have this small groups, there is too much noise, and I can't concentrate (S2, F2F/Blended).

> "Or maybe I'm sitting between two groups who are speaking [in a F2F class]. There is one group, we are in the middle, and there is another, and that's why from both sides I hear this 'sh-sh-sh' sound" (S2, F2F/Blended).

Feeling safe to make mistakes was mentioned as another advantage of breakout rooms:

> Because if I don't understand how to do something, well, I can ask a colleague. And if we both cannot get the idea, we just wait for J. and then ask and it stays with us, and then J. gives his feedback to everyone after this small exercise in the word format. He shows the correct variant, and he never mentions who made the error. … But in class, everyone will look at you and it's something I don't like. (S2, F2F/Blended).
> "I really like that in this virtual breakout room, there are three of us, online: the teacher and us" (S4, Online).

For most respondents from the online course convenience was the main advantage of this method:

> "…this online teaching fit well for me at that time" (S2, Online).
> "It was good because at the time I lived outside Riga. And therefore, it was nice that I could just switch on my computer and be on the course" (S3, Online).
> "I think the fact that it was from the comfort of my home and my coach, it also helped. … I'm not sure I would have been able to attend all of the classes if they happened somewhere" (S4, Online).
> "I really liked the online course because then I am at home in my safe place in my room with my mug of tea or coffee, and I feel more comfortable". (S5, Online).

Issues with Online

The biggest of these seemed to be the fact that focusing requires extra effort from both a student and a teacher:

> "So, you see the faces, but sometimes you see somebody's drinking tea or coffee. It's good, no objections. But nevertheless, it means that you are un-focusing, so and the group is also un-focusing" (S1, F2F/Blended).
> "I as a teacher, feel that they are not as concentrated on lectures online as a face-to-face" (S2, F2F/Blended).
> "… is also more demanding for learners, definitely, because you have to prepare yourself and you have to do these things even staying on the other side of the screen. So that actually requires more effort from you" (S1, Online).

Another factor mentioned by Online students was the need to be comfortable with technology and to have no distractions:

> "If a person has very big problems with computers, I think it's not good. Then he will be nervous about technical things" (S3, Online).
> "I think I'm lucky I didn't have any disturbances at home, so I could just sit down and listen and engage with everyone" (S4, Online).

Convenience of online classes was obviously appreciated. At the same time, students evidently valued communication in the Zoom breakout rooms as it provides comfort and the feeling of safety. This confirmed the findings of Lazarevic and Bentz (2021) on lower levels of stress perceived by students in an online mode. At the same time, the stated challenge of the pressure to stay focused when studying and teaching electronically confirmed the conclusion by Brachtl et al. (2023) that an online modality is best suited for adult students. On the other hand, the social nature of language learning discussed in Firth and Wagner (2007) and generally in education was confirmed by the value the respondents placed on social interactions.

Flipped Classroom

Respondents from both groups thought positively of the flipped classroom model:

> "Yeah, I prefer this pre-class because I can do it when I have time … when I have some pause in work, for example, I can do this online exercise, and check results. I like that" (S2, Online).
> "Yeah, yeah, as pre-class, it's really great … Yeah, I try getting into this topic and it's really good. Yeah, and it goes faster. I have some questions and they will be answered by the teacher" (S4, F2F/Blended).
> "Actually, it's a good way how to teach: when you must do some home exercises and at least prepare a little bit for next class. I think it's a good way how to teach" (S2, Online).
> "Well, I liked these pre-classes - some tasks that we had before. We could think about the topic a little bit which will be discussed later" (S3, Online).

Optimal Variant

All the respondents were asked which approach they thought was optimal. Most sounded confident:

> "Definitely face-to-face. Definitely" (S1, F2F/Blended).
> "100% for blended. Because, if one face-to-face is more with grammar, I think it's enough … and the next class is just speaking. It's perfect, and it can be online and you feel very comfortable there" (S2, F2F/Blended).
> "…but now it's a dream. It's a perfect situation. I think it can't be better, what we have at that moment – now" (S3, F2F/Blended).
> "I think we have optimal now. … Yeah, blended. … . And I said it's good to meet every second time. Yeah, for saving time" (S4, F2F/Blended).

Three out of five students from an online course also named blended as the best variant while the other two said they could only comment on what they had experienced:

> I would say that for adult learners who are coming to these classes with the understanding that they really need it, they really want to do it, I would say that this

> distance learning style is quite good and actually can completely replace contact hours. This blended learning I would say is even better. Because, yes, we are social things. It's better to come and listen and to see the group. And even for instructors, it is necessary from time to time to see what is happening, to see these faces and to see the feedback on the faces (S1, Online).
>
> "I think probably this blended variant is the best one" (S2, Online).
> "I think the third one, blended. Yes" (S3, Online).
> "I don't know, but maybe blended classes work too but I don't have such experience. … I don't see a big difference. But I like to be at home. Yes. And I like to be in my place. Yes" (S5, Online).

Thus, six out of nine respondents considered the blended format to be optimal for adult students. This supported the assertions that different modalities increase flexibility of delivery, online and blended courses should be carefully planned, and flipped classroom suits adult students (Ahlin, 2021; Chen et al., 2014; Gacs et al., 2020). However, there was a difference between the opinions expressed by respondents as students and those when they move into the role of educators. As students, they expressed a slight preference for the online methodology, which might have been related to the convenience of an online course.

Overall, the results showed that mature students appreciate the flexibility a flipped classroom provides. This is also illustrated in SET values for online and blended modalities, which incorporated flipped classroom, being higher than those for the F2F which is considered a "golden standard" for language teaching. Moreover, high completion rates (72.9% in F2F, 100% in Online, 97% in Blended) and the interviewees' opinions that their motivation did not change over the course confirm that students think it aids learning and can be implemented in adult education.

Conclusions

This paper contributes to the research into adult students' perceptions of different modalities in three ways. Firstly, it focuses on adult students. Secondly, it is based on comparable data: students' demographics, course content, volume, and core teaching materials, instructors, with a modality as a single independent variable. Thirdly, it combines SETs with opinions of alumni who are also experts, thus providing a comprehensive view.

The results indicated that a language course could be successfully delivered using any of the modalities provided it is properly developed. Flipped blended format was considered optimal by the respondents as it incorporated F2F and online as well as synchronous and asynchronous components. Besides, it easily transformed into fully flipped online format when the circumstances demanded it. That indicates the potential to reduce barriers to participation in education for adult students and the flexibility for adult educators to plan their courses.

The findings also reinforced the essential role teachers play in education, including adult language education. Thus, teachers need to be trained in methodology and approaches of teaching F2F, online, and in blended modalities, as well as flipped classroom. Moreover, since adult language education differs from teaching other age groups, special training programs for adult language teachers might be feasible.

The results show that research findings regarding suitability of online, blended, and flipped learning in university education are applicable to adult education. Finally, the consistency of alumni' and students' opinions of their experience validated using SETs as an efficient instrument for evaluating teaching effectiveness in adult education.

Limitations of Research

The research focused on the mode of delivery in a language course controlling for other factors. Thus, it did not address English language teaching methodology, teaching materials, teachers' qualifications, and students' characteristics. It is possible that less motivated students or the ones with a lower level of education would respond to the modalities differently. Less experienced teachers may also need support in selecting and curating supplementary materials or adapting commercial ones to the needs of their students. However, considering that research was focused on comparing the same teachers, content, and materials this should not impact the general implication of research conclusions.

Recommendations for Further Research

Students in this research were motivated adults who chose to participate in the course. Similar quasi-experiments applying the same formats to teaching additional languages to university students would be recommended. Considering that two groups of demographically comparable students with different sources of funding for training demonstrated slightly different results, further research into the impact of economic factors on students' perception of their experience might be another avenue of inquiry.

Comparing learning outcomes of a course taught using three different approaches would add to the research into teaching effectiveness. In the case of adult language learners, long-term outcomes reflecting retention of knowledge would be preferable. This could be measured by a standardized language proficiency test administered after the completion of a course.

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EFL Learners' Attributions and Causal Dimensionality Styles in the Chinese Higher Education Context

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Abstract

Achievement motivation is a significant contributor to the foreign language learning process. This study explored the achievement perceptions of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners who were studying at different higher education institutions with dissimilar degree programs, such as a vocational college, an undergraduate program in a public university, and Sino-American university undergraduate and graduate programs in China. The study also aimed to reveal EFLs' causal attributions of success and their underlying dimensionality styles through an open-ended questionnaire and the Causal Attribution Dimensions Scale (CDSII) (McAuley et al., 1992). Findings revealed that two thirds of the participants perceived themselves as unsuccessful learners. Both in success and failure conditions the participants had similar attributions naming effort, interest, and ability as the most frequent ones. The attributions for close ended question did not show difference across school types. Qualitative data revealed more themes for failure, and the data showed some differences across the school types. Environment and relevance to life/career attributions were the most common in both success and failure conditions. Causal dimensionality analysis revealed more internal, personally controllable stable and moderately externally manageable attributional styles for success, and more internal and personally controllable attributional styles for failure. Findings were compared and discussed according to school types.

Keywords: attributions, EFL, motivation, causal dimensions, Chinese higher education

English, as the medium of instruction, has been accepted as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005) around the world, and like many other countries, China has been initiating education policies that encourage EFL learning to enhance the country's international competitiveness in the global arena. Consequently, the number of people learning English as a foreign language has rapidly expanded over the past several decades. Compared to the Western countries, the study of language learning motivation in the Chinese education context might reveal insights in terms of learner perceptions, learning context, language curriculum, and language assessment due to differences that are peculiar to the Chinese EFL milieu.

Causal attributions are known as important factors that affect learners' retention, expectation of future success, motivation, and academic success. There are qualitative and quantitative studies that focus on the causal dimensions of foreign language learners in Western settings (e.g., Faber, 2019; Kálmán & Eugenio, 2015; Soriano-Ferrer & Alonso-Blanco, 2020 Ciabuca & Gheorghe, 2014). However, there is a limited number of studies examining the attributions and causal dimensionality styles of foreign language learners in the Chinese higher education environments, and these studies appear to fall short of reflecting the current EFL education scenario as they are rather outdated. Also, these studies mostly focus on EFL learners' attributions while ignoring the causal dimensionality styles (e.g. Chen, 2011; Hu et al., 2009; Jiang, 2003; Li, 2004; Qin, 2002; Su, 2011; Zhang, 2002; Zhang; 2006; Zhang &Yuan, 2004). Therefore, obtaining detailed data on achievement motivations by examining the perceptions of success, attributions, and causal dimensions of adult EFL learners studying in different educational institutions in China can potentially make a significant contribution to the relevant literature.

Literature Review

Motivation has been the focus of a large body of research in education contexts Dörnyei, 2001; Hussain et al., 2020; Liu & Zhang, 2020; Safdari, 2021 One of the theories of motivation is educational psychologist Weiner's (1972) attribution theory. This theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. In this study, attributions are defined as the reasons people give for their outcomes and the connections between those reasons and their future behavior. This definition is based on Weiner's attribution theory. The use of the term is limited to achievement motivation and educational contexts in this study. Weiner (1985) notes that there are three dimensions of attributions: locus of control (internal vs. external), stability (stable vs. unstable), and controllability (controllable vs. uncontrollable). These dimensions can be used to explain why people make certain attributions for success or failure. In an academic context, attributions refer to the ways individuals explain the causes of their academic achievements. Every one of those dimensions has unique behavioral and emotional consequences (Graham, 2020). The locus dimension mainly concerns self-esteem and emotions tied to how one is perceived. On the other hand, the stability dimension of causality primarily shapes one's outlook on future successes and failures (Graham, 2020). These attributions can influence perceptions, attitudes, future behaviors, and consequently possibility of academic achievements.

Public schools in China start teaching English in the third grade, and English is a compulsory subject in vocational high schools and general high schools, and in all universities. China regards proficiency in a foreign language as one of the fundamental skills for students in primary and middle school (Cheng, 2014). Ou and Yang (2014) point out that the status of English in the college entrance examination is equal to that of Chinese. Despite the growing body of research in numerous diverse cultural contexts (e.g. Çağatay & Erten, 2020 in Turkey; Faber, 2019 in Germany; Ciabuca & Gheorghe, 2014 in Romania;Nakamura, 2019 in Japan ;, Soriano-Ferrer & Alonso-Blanco, 2020 in Spain; Taskiran & Aydin, 2018, in Turkey; Bouchaib et al., 2018 in Morocco; Zarein et al., 2020 in Iran), China lacks a substantial body of information about attributions in situations involving achievement, particularly when it comes to learning EFL. The fact that Chinese EFL students are taught in unique cultural and academic environments that are quite different from those of their western counterparts supports the notion that studies have not looked at the peculiar language learning attributions of Chinese EFL students. Earlier attribution literature in the Chinese frame of reference includes studies conducted on EFL achievement/success, EFL motivation, and EFL attributions (e.g. Hu et al., 2009; Jiang, 2003; Lei & Qin, 2009; Li, 2004; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Qin, 2002; Su, 2011; Zhang, 2002; Zhang &Yuan, 2004; Zhang, 2006). However, the focus of such studies tends to be attributions alone. They do not address causal dimensionality styles of language learners. Furthermore, they are not sufficiently contemporary.

It is important to investigate the attributions of Chinese EFL learners because learners may have context-specific experiences and cultural backgrounds that influence their attributions in the language learning process. As for the attribution studies in the Chinese context, Qin's (2002) case study that focused on influence of attributional tendencies on motivational behavior at the university level revealed differences in attributions across different proficiency levels. Similarly, Zhang's (2002) study with college juniors revealed that maladaptive attributions, such as ability, had a negative impact on sustaining language learning motivation and self-efficacy in the failure condition. Li (2004) conducted another study that demonstrated the close connection between attributions and language learning motivation. Findings showed that most students who performed poorly in English ascribed their success or failure to luck. The author concluded that the unpredictable, unstable, and external ascription seemed to hinder learning motivation, enthusiasm, and retention in the language learning process. Hu et al. (2009) examined attributions from a different perspective by centering on the relationship between attributions and autonomy among college level EFL learners. The researchers noted that encouraging students to actively attribute and correct attribution was a crucial part of enhancing students' capacity for language learning autonomy. The links between achievement goal orientation, language learning self-efficacy, language learning anxiety, language learning strategies, and attributions were examined in a different study by Zhang and Yuan (2004). Participants held the view that inability and bad luck were not among the factors that would lead to failure, and that good luck was not relevant in the success condition. According to the authors, that attribution model helped language learners to increase their self-efficacy when they succeed, but failure did not lower it.

When the relevant literature in the Chinese context is considered, there is a need for an up-to-date attribution study in every area of education as attributions differ across cultures, contexts, and individuals. Particularly, causal dimensionality styles of EFL learners should be examined in detail as dimensionality styles are known to be significant determinants of future performance, self-esteem, motivation, and academic success (Weiner, 2012). The relationships between attributions, causal dimensional styles and emotions can be quite complex; therefore, it is important to consider both the context and the learner specific aspects when conducting an analysis (Graham, 2020; Hattie et al., 2020). As the list of potential causes of success and failure cannot be explained clearly, attribution theorists have concentrated not only on specific causes per se but also on the underlying dimensions or qualities of causes. Age and context factors have an impact on how attributions are perceived. As a result, attributional research is phenomenological, studying the causal world from the perspective of the perceiver. Attribution theorists (Nolen, 2020), hold that circumstances and context have the ability to affect causal reasoning. For instance, according to early cross-cultural studies, participants from non-Western nations like Chile and India thought that ability attribution was more unstable on the stability dimension than it was in western civilizations (Betancourt & Weiner, 1982). Furthermore, studies on development showed that most students did not think of ability as having consistent trait-like qualities until early adolescence (Stipek & MacIver, 1989).

The subject of this study was to obtain detailed data on achievement motivation by examining the perceptions of success, attributions, and causal dimensions of EFL learners in different educational institutions in China. The inquiry intended to reveal the factors that affect the motivation of Chinese EFL learners, who are the most important stakeholders in language learning, in both success and failure situations. In order to serve the purpose, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1) What are Chinese EFL learners' perceptions of success?
2) What do Chinese EFL learners attribute their success and failure to?
    2.1) What are their choices from the provided list of attributions?
    2.2) What attributions do they state for their perc eived success and failure?
3) What are the causal dimensionality patterns of Chinese EFL learners?
4) Do causal dimensionality patterns of the participants differ according to success and failure perceptions?
5) Do causal dimensionality patterns of the participants differ according to institutions and degree programs?

Method

This descriptive survey study incorporated convergent parallel mixed methods design (Timans et al., 2019) in data collection and data analysis. Two different instruments were used for gathering data. The quantitative data was collected via a valid scale, CDSII (McAuley et al., 1992) and the qualitative data was collected through a questionnaire that was compiled by the researchers. CDSII was used as a data collection tool in this study because it is the only comprehensive, valid, and reliable scale that focuses on four dimensions of attributions in the

literature. The questionnaire and the scale were presented online as the data collection instruments.

Context of the Study

For the purpose of the study, different higher education institutions in China were selected. They included Wenzhou-Kean University – a Sino-American University, Jiaxing University, Zhejiang Institute of Communications – a vocational college, Huaxin College of Hebei Geo University, and Sun Yat-sen University. The study groups included public university undergraduate and graduate programs, a vocational college program, and Sino-American university undergraduate and graduate programs. Undergraduate education is responsible for cultivating professional talents and equipping students with the abilities to continue their studies in graduate education (Yu, 2016, p.332). A vocational college education in China is an education model based on professional skills. The study period is shorter than what is required in the undergraduate program. An international education style is made possible for students at Sino-American universities (Zou et al., 2022). Compared to other traditional universities in China, the Sino-American cooperative university offers students English as a medium of instruction and more foreign staff than Chinese staff (Zhao, 2021).

Participants

The sampling procedure of the study included two different techniques. First, through convenience sampling, the researchers reached the potential participants whose WeChat contacts they had. Then, through snowball sampling technique, the researchers asked participants to share the online version of the questionnaire and the scale link with their friends. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and the consent forms were attached at the beginning of the data collection tool. The participants were all adults, above 18 years of age. A total of 561 participants voluntarily answered the questionnaire and the scale. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

	Case	*N561*		*Case*	*N=561*
Participants	*n*	*%*		*n*	*%*
Age			**School Type**		
≤25	367	65%	Graduate	121	22%
>25	194	35%	Sino-American	129	23%
			Vocational College	148	26%
			Undergraduate	163	29%
Gender			**English Learning Background**		
Female	356	63%	≤5 years	16	3%
Male	205	37%	6-10 years	105	19%
			>11 years	440	78%

Data Collection

Prior to the data collection, ethics committee approval was received for this study from the Wenzhou-Kean University Ethics Committee with issue number: WKUIRB2023-046/R. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of data collection. The first part of the data collection instrument consisted of a questionnaire, prepared by the researchers, that included a list of questions for demographic information, such as age, education background, year of English learning experience and a yes/no question that asked if participants believed they were successful EFL learners. In order to obtain the participants' genuine opinions about their achievement in language learning rather than relying on outside factors like grades or remarks from their professors, the researchers simply asked one yes/no question concerning the participants' perceptions of success. The next question asked participants to choose from the list of attributions that were common in the literature according to their perception of success. At the end of the common attributions list, there was an open-ended question asking participants to state if there was any other reason for their success or failure. The purpose of the open-ended question was to let the students describe their attributions in an open manner, so it could be said that the study accurately represented the attributional characteristics of the participants. The data was collected online on Sojump, a suitable survey tool for obtaining nationally diversified samples in China at a low cost (Delponte at al, 2024).

As the second part of the data collection instrument, the participants were presented with the Causal Dimensions Scale II (CDSII), which is a nine-point Likert-type scale (McAuley et al., 1992) used for exploring learners' causal dimensionality patterns. According to existing research, dimensional styles differed amongst people and did not necessarily align with the researchers' subjective perceptions of dimensional attributes (Graham, 2020; Hattie, et al, 2020). The key to the motivational qualities of attributions was identified in the underlying cognitive component, which stands for the person's views about the nature of the attribution (Graham, 2020). As a result, through that scale, the participants were asked to determine the unique features of their attributions themselves. The scale had four dimensions: causal focus (items 1-6-9), external control (items 5-8-12), stability (items 3-7-11), and internal control (items 2-4-10). Two opposite statements were placed on each item on the nine-point scale, and the participants were asked to choose a number according to which statement they felt close to. The highest score that could be obtained from the three items in each dimension was 27, and the lowest score was three. High scores from each dimension indicated that the cause was internal, stable, and individually controllable. In the scale, the participants were asked to score the statements according to their causal attributions. Necessary permissions for the copyright of the CDSII had been obtained. The Chinese version of the scale was used in the study to be able to get more reliable responses. It was adopted from Wang's (2020) study, in which internal dimensions' consistencies were calculated, and the Cronbach's Alpha, known as the most widely used objective measure of reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) of source of control, stability, internal control, and external control were 0.67, 0.67, 0.79, and 0.82, respectively, which meant that the scale was found to be reliable and valid for the measure of dimensions.

Additionally, 20 Chinese students were given the Chinese version of the scale and the questionnaire for the face validity. Participants in the pilot research assessed the clarity of the instructions, the items, and the answer format. According to the feedback from the pilot study, necessary editions were made to make the data collection instruments more reader friendly. Both the questionnaire and the scale were distributed to the participants via Sojump.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed differently depending on the question type. For demographic information and the list of attributions in the questionnaire, the data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, mainly with frequency percentages. For the CDSII, the data was analyzed on SPSS (IBM SPSS Software, n.d.). By computing the mean scores of each dimension individually for the success and failure groups, descriptive statistics were used to examine the causal dimensionality of the participants. Using ANOVA (Judd et al., 2017), dimensionality style comparisons between the success and failure groups were calculated. Similarly, ANOVA statistics were run to find out whether causal dimensionality styles of the participants differed according to school types in success and failure conditions.

For the qualitative data analysis, the researchers used the Constant Comparison Method (Williams & Moser, 2019) to conduct a content analysis of the data. According to this method, analysis is carried out by comparing all semantic units acquired from inductive category coding concurrently. The inductive method (Azungah, 2018) was used to identify the indicators for academic attributions in participants' responses to demonstrate the culture and context specific nature of attributions. In other words, rather than limiting themselves to hypothetical arguments, the researchers truly intended to look for genuine attributions in the participants' statements. Therefore, the coding strategy used during the content analysis was neither predetermined nor did it draw from the relevant literature. The researchers compared the codes, and they only assigned the codes after reaching consensus. After categorizing the participants' responses, all labels that emerged for success and failure conditions were tallied according to their frequency. Since the success and failure groups revealed distinct labels, the percentages of explanations for success and failure situations were compared individually. In addition, the attributions were also grouped according to school type both in success and failure conditions.

Findings

The participants answered the yes/no question in the questionnaire to express their perceived success and failure in learning EFL. The responses of 561 participants indicated that most of them believed they were not successful EFL learners. Table 2 shows the frequency percentages of perceived success and failure.

Table 2

Perception of Success

Perception of success	*f*	*%*
unsuccessful	412	73.4*
successful	149	26.6
Total	561	100

Note. * Highest percentage

Participants were asked to choose at least three attributions from the list of attributions that are common in the literature. Table 3 below demonstrates the frequency percentages of the attributions chosen by the participants in success and failure conditions. Effort, interest, and ability attributions appeared to be at the top of the list in both success and failure terms. Luck, difficulty, and the teacher appeared to be the least frequent attributions in both groups.

Table 3

Common Attributions in Success and Failure Conditions

Failure-oriented group			*Success-oriented group*		
Attributions	*f*	*%*	*Attributions*	*f*	*%*
Effort	337	**25.8***	Effort	127	**24.5***
Interest	297	22.8	Interest	124	23.9
Ability	243	18.6	Ability	120	23.1
Difficulty	220	16.9	Teacher	90	17.3
Teacher	140	10.7	Luck	43	8.3
Luck	68	5.2	Difficulty	15	2.9
Total	1305	100	**Total**	519	100

Note. * Highest percentage

When selecting attributions from the provided list, participants from various higher educational institutions tended to make selections that were similar to one another with ability, effort, and interest attributions as the most frequent ones. Particularly, the similarity appeared to be higher in the failure condition. In the failure condition, the most common attribution was found to be effort in all school types, while the least common one was luck. In the success condition, the least common attribution appeared to be difficulty for all school types. Table 4 below shows the distribution of attributions according to school types.

Table 4

Distribution of Attributions According to School Types

					School Type			
Perception	*Graduate*	*f*	*Sino-American*	*f*	*Vocational College*	*f*	*Undergraduate*	*f*
Success-oriented	**Ability***	39	**Effort**	57	**Interest**	16	**Interest**	27
	Effort	35	Ability	49	Effort	12	Effort	24
	Interest	32	Interest	49	Ability	9	Ability	23
	Teacher	25	Teacher	42	Luck	7	Teacher	16
	Luck	9	Luck	21	Teacher	6	Luck	6
	Difficulty	2	Difficulty	8	Difficulty	4	Difficulty	1
Failure-oriented	**Effort**	62	**Effort**	59	**Effort**	107	**Effort**	109
	Interest	58	Ability	45	Interest	100	Interest	103
	Ability	44	Difficulty	42	Ability	86	Difficulty	70
	Difficulty	39	Interest	36	Difficulty	69	Ability	68
	Teacher	32	Teacher	28	Teacher	38	Teacher	42
	Luck	7	Luck	10	Luck	23	Luck	28

	Attributions both in failure and success conditions				
	Graduate %	*Sino American %*	*Vocational %*	*Undergraduate %*	*Total*
Ability	22	21	20	18	20
Difficulty	11	11	15	14	13
Effort	**25***	**26**	**25**	**26**	**25**
Interest	24	19	24	25	23
Luck	4	7	6	7	6
Teacher	15	16	9	11	13

Note. *Most frequent attributions bold faced

The responses to the open-ended question revealed 17 different themes for the success condition. On the other hand, the participants had more responses for the failure condition with 25 different themes. Table 5 demonstrates the themes created by combination of codes driven from the open-ended question data both in success and failure circumstances with their frequencies. The most common theme in both success and failure-oriented groups was the environment.

Table 5

Frequencies of the Themes Driven from the Open-Ended Question

Failure-oriented	*f*	*Success-oriented*	*f*
Environment	49	Environment	9
Lack of interest	16	Relevant to life/career	8
Irrelevant to life /career	16	Ability	8
Ability	13	Learning resources	6
Lack of effort	10	Interest	5
Education system	7	Opportunity	4
Lack of time	6	Family support	4
Lack of skills	5	Persistence	2
Difficulty	5	Learning method	2
Teacher	4	Confidence	2
Persistence	4	Motivation	1
Laziness	4	Learning atmosphere	1
Lack of autonomy	3	Getting help	1
Not like	2	Experience	1
Not getting help	2	Effort	1
Lack of motivation	2	Education system	1
Lack of learning strategies	2	Background /foundation	1
Lack of learning materials/resources	2		
Social judgement	1		
Low self-esteem	1		
Learning atmosphere	1		
Lack of experience	1		
Lack of confidence	1		
Lack of background	1		
Family manipulation	1		
Total	159	Total	57

Content analyses of the responses to the open-ended question revealed fewer themes in the success condition compared to the failure condition. When themes were grouped according to school types in the success condition, the group that responded most was the Sino-American group with relevant to life/career, interest, environment, family support, and opportunity attributions as the most frequently repeated ones. None of the school group ascribed their success to luck. Table 6 below describes the distribution of the themes according to school types in the success condition.

Table 6

Distribution of the Themes According to School Types in the Success Condition

Success attributions	School Type				
	Graduate	*Sino-American University*	*Vocational college*	*Undergraduate*	*Total*
Environment	4	5			9
Relevant to life/career	3	3		2	8
Ability	6			2	8
Interest	1	3		1	5
Learning resources		2		3	5
Family support		3		1	4
Opportunity	1	3			4
Confidence		1	1		2
Learning method	2				2
Persistence				2	2
Total	18	27	1	11	57

More themes emerged from the responses to the open-ended question in failure group. When the themes driven from the responses were grouped according to school types, the most regularly mentioned attribution appeared to be environment by both graduate and Sino-American groups. Unlike the success condition, vocational college, and undergraduate groups, which were the most crowded groups, tended to respond more in the failure condition. None of the school group mentioned luck as a causal attribution behind their failure. Table 7 demonstrates the themes according to the school types with the frequencies.

Table 7

Distribution of the Themes According to School Types in the Failure Condition

	School Type				
Failure attributions	*Graduate*	*Sino-American university*	*Vocational college*	*Undergraduate*	*Total*
Environment	18	9	9	13	49
Irrelevant to life /career	0	0	5	11	16
Lack of interest	0	2	11	3	16
Ability	1	3	3	6	13
Lack of effort	0	2	5	3	10
Education system	5	1	1	0	7
Lack of time	0	0	1	5	6
Difficulty	0	1	4	0	5
Lack of skills	0	2	2	1	5
Laziness	0	2	1	1	4
Persistence	2	0	1	1	4
Teacher	2	0	1	1	4
Lack of autonomy	0	0	2	1	3
Lack of learning resources	0	2	0	0	2
Lack of learning strategies	0	0	2	0	2
Lack of motivation	0	1	1	0	2
Not getting help	1	0	0	1	2
Not like	0	0	2	0	2
Total	29	27	51	52	159

Descriptive statistics of CDSII scale revealed more internal, personally controllable, stable and moderately externally controllable attributional styles for the success-oriented group. Personal control mean score appeared to be the highest followed by locus and stability. Table 8 demonstrates the descriptive analysis results of CDSII in the success condition.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of CDSII in the Success Condition

Dimensions	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**Std Error**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Sam Var**	**Kurtosis**	**Skewness**
Locus	447	6.,34	2.00	0.09	7	7	3.99	-0.28	-0.57
Personal Control	447	6.53	1.94	0.09	7	7	3.76	0.07	-0.76
Stability	447	5.55	2.23	0.11	6	7	4.96	-0.99	-0.08
External Control	447	4.87	2.25	0.11	5	5	5.05	-0.83	0.08

In the failure condition, descriptive statistics of CDSII revealed relatively more internal and personally controllable attributional styles. The locus dimension mean score appeared to be the highest followed by personal control and stability. Overall, the group's responses suggest a moderate belief in stability and a modest belief in external controllability. Table 9 shows the descriptive analysis results of CDSII in the failure condition.

Table 9

Descriptive statistics of CDSII in the failure condition

Dimensions	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*Std Error*	*Med*	*Mode*	*SamVar*	*Kurtosis*	*Skewness*
Locus	1236	5.69	1.86	0.05	5	5	3.46	-0.10	-0.15
Personal Control	1236	5.29	1.81	0.05	5	5	3.26	0.07	-0.05
Stability	1236	4.92	1.92	0.05	5	5	3.72	-0.27	-0.02
External Control	1236	4.77	1.93	0.06	5	5	3.76	-0.26	-0.10

Possible differences in terms of causal dimensionality between success and failure-oriented groups were analyzed with the descriptive statistics and ANOVA group comparisons. Descriptive statistics results can be seen in Table 10, and ANOVA results can be found in Table 11. The success-oriented group appeared to have higher mean scores for all dimensions. Locus and personal control dimensions were found to have the highest mean scores in both groups.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of CDSII in Both Success and Failure Conditions

						95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
Dimensions	*Groups*	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*
Locus	success	447	**6.34***	2.00	.094	6.15	6.52
	failure	1236	5.69	1.86	.053	5.58	5.79
Personal Control	success	447	**6.53**	1.94	.092	6.35	6.71
	failure	1236	5.29	1.81	.051	5.18	5.39
Stability	success	447	**5.55**	2.23	.105	5.34	5.76
	failure	1236	4.92	1.92	.055	4.81	5.02
External Control	success	447	**4.87**	2.25	.106	4.66	5.08
	failure	1236	4.77	1,.93	.055	4.66	4.88

Note. *Higher values bold faced

ANOVA analysis between success and failure groups revealed significant differences in locus, personal control, and stability dimensions. When mean scores were considered, the success group appeared to have more internal, personally controllable, and more stable attributions. There was no significant difference in terms of external controllability dimension as both groups had about moderate perception. Table 11 below shows the ANOVA analysis of the causal dimensions both in success and failure conditions.

Table 11

Differences in Terms of Dimensions between Success and Failure Groups

		ANOVA				
Dimensions		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Locus	Between Groups	138.134	1	138.134	38.333	<.001
	Within Groups	6057.492	1681	3.604		
	Total	6195.626	1682			
Personal Control	Between Groups	510.344	1	510.344	150.415	<.001
	Within Groups	5703.463	1681	3.393		
	Total	6213.807	1682			
Stability	Between Groups	131.558	1	131.558	32.509	<.001
	Within Groups	6802.796	1681	4.047		
	Total	6934.354	1682			
External Control	Between Groups	3.139	1	3.139	.765	.382
	Within Groups	6895.957	1681	4.102		
	Total	6899.096	1682			

The analyses of differences in terms of scopes across school types in the success condition revealed significant differences for stability and external control dime neither nsions. There were no significant differences between school types in terms of locus and personal control dimensions. Table 12 below shows the mean scores of elements for each school type and Table 13 shows the ANOVA results of the school type comparisons in the success condition.

Table 12

Mean Scores of Dimensions for School Types in the Success Condition

School Type		*Locus*	*Personal Control*	*Stability*	*External Control*
Graduate	Mean	6.37	**6.79**	**5.94**	4.84
	N	129	129	129	129
	Std. Deviation	2.008	1.840	2.072	2.252
Sino-American	Mean	6,21	6.43	5.08	4.45
	N	183	183	183	183
	Std. Deviation	2.020	2.020	2.346	2.195
Vocational College	Mean	6.36	6.24	5.78	**5.51**
	N	45	45	45	45
	Std. Deviation	2.101	1.897	1.964	2.283
Undergraduate	Mean	**6.56***	6.62	5.84	5.46
	N	87	87	87	87
	Std. Deviation	1891	1.869	2.209	2.182

Note. *Higher values bold faced

Table 13

Comparisons of School Types in Terms of Dimensions in the Success Condition

		ANOVA				
Dimensions		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Locus	Between Groups	7.422	3	2.474	.618	.603
	Within Groups	1760.541	440	4.001		
	Total	1767.964	443			
Personal Control	Between Groups	14.912	3	4.971	1.338	.262
	Within Groups	1634.897	440	3.716		
	Total	1649.809	443			
Stability	Between Groups	69.111	3	23.037	4.735	.003
	Within Groups	2140.799	440	4.865		
	Total	2209.910	443			
External Control	Between Groups	81.414	3	27.138	5.515	.001
	Within Groups	2165.010	440	4.920		
	Total	2246.423	443			

To understand exactly which school types differed significantly in terms of stability and external control factors, post-hoc Scheffe statistics were run. Findings revealed that the Graduate group had significantly more stable attributions than the Sino-American group. For external control dimension, both Vocational College and Undergraduate groups had significantly more externally controllable attributions compared to the Sino-American. Table 14 below demonstrates the comparison of the groups in terms of stability and external control dimensions.

Table 14

Comparison of the School Types for Stability and External Control Dimensions

						95% Confidence Interval	
Dependent Variable	*School Type*	*School Type*	*Mean Difference*	*Std. Error*	*Sig.*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*
Stability	Graduate	Sino-American	**.856***	.254	.010	.14	1.57
		Vocational College	.160	.382	.981	-.91	1.23
		Undergraduate	.099	.306	.991	-.76	.96
	Sino-American	Graduate	**-.856***	.254	.010	-1.57	-.14
		Vocational College	-.696	.367	.310	-1.73	.33
		Undergraduate	-.757	.287	.075	-1.56	.05
External Control	Sino-American	Graduate	-.397	.255	.490	-1.11	.32
		Vocational College	**-1.063***	.369	.042	-2.10	-.03
		Undergraduate	**-1.012***	.289	.007	-1.82	-.20
	Vocational College	Graduate	.666	.384	.391	-.41	1.74
		Sino-American	**1.063***	.369	.042	.03	2.10
		Undergraduate	.051	.407	.999	-1.09	1.19
	Undergraduate	Graduate	.615	.308	.264	-.25	1.48
		Sino-American	**1.012***	.289	.007	.20	1.82
		Vocational College	-.051	.407	.999	-1.19	1.09

The analyses of differences in terms of features across school types in the failure condition revealed significant differences for only locus dimension. There were no significant differences between school types in terms of personal control, stability, and external control dimensions. Table 15 below shows the mean scores of dimensions for each school type and Table 16 shows the ANOVA results of the school type comparisons in the failure condition.

Table 15

Mean Scores of Dimensions for School Types in the Failure Condition

School Type		*Locus*	*Personal Control*	*Stability*	*External Control*
Graduate	Mean	5.84	5.42	**5.12**	4.74
	N	231	231	231	231
	Std. Deviation	1.80	1.76	1.90	1.92
Sino-American	Mean	**6.06**	**5.43**	4.65	**5.00**
	N	204	204	204	204
	Std. Deviation	1.80	1.77	1.97	1.92
Vocational College	Mean	5.42	5.09	4.91	4.90
	N	399	399	399	399
	Std. Deviation	1.74	1.75	1.82	1.90
Undergraduate	Mean	5.67	5.33	4.94	4.54
	N	402	402	402	402
	Std. Deviation	*2.00*	*1.89*	*2.02*	*1.98*

Note. *Higher values bold faced

ANOVA results in Table 16 showed the significance of the difference between the groups in terms of the locus dimension. To understand exactly which school types differed significantly in terms of the locus dimension, post-hoc Scheffe statistics were run.

Table 16

Comparisons of School Types in Terms of Dimensions in the Failure Condition

		ANOVA				
Dimensions		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Locus	Between Groups	61.385	3	20.462	5.979	<.001
	Within Groups	4216.443	1232	3.422		
	Total	4277.828	1235			
PersonalControl	Between Groups	24.949	3	8.316	2.559	.054
	Within Groups	4003.235	1232	3.249		
	Total	4028.184	1235			
Stability	Between Groups	24.273	3	8.091	2.183	.088
	Within Groups	4565.807	1232	3.706		
	Total	4590.080	1235			
ExternalControl	Between Groups	37.650	3	12.550	3.356	.018
	Within Groups	4607.095	1232	3.740		
	Total	4644.744	1235			

Table 17 below demonstrates the Scheffe results. According to the statistics, the Sino-American group significantly differed from the Vocational college in their mean scores for the Locus dimension. That is, the Sino-American group appeared to have more internal attributions in the failure condition compared to the vocational college group.

Table 17

Comparison of School Types for the Locus Dimension

Dependent Variable	SchoolType	SchoolType	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Locus	**Sino American**	Graduate	.219	.178	.678	-.28	.72
		Vocational College	**.635***	**.159**	**.001**	.19	1.08
		Undergraduate	.387	.159	.116	-.06	.83

Note.*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion

In this study the majority of the participants perceived themselves as unsuccessful in learning English. The fact that three-fourths of the participants perceived themselves as unsuccessful is a significant highlight for several reasons. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of understanding learner perspectives and experiences in language education. By acknowledging their perceived lack of success, educators can gain valuable insights into the challenges learners face and tailor instructional methods accordingly. Secondly, this highlight underscores the need for a learner-centered approach in EFL instruction. Recognizing that a majority of learners feel unsuccessful prompts educators to shift their focus from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more personalized and adaptive teaching style. This could involve incorporating learner interests, providing individualized support, and adopting strategies that address specific difficulties faced by learners. Moreover, this highlight emphasizes the significance of fostering a growth mindset among EFL learners. By perceiving themselves as unsuccessful, learners may develop negative attitudes and beliefs about their language abilities, hindering their motivation and progress. Educators can use this insight to promote a positive learning environment and empower learners by cultivating their self-belief, resilience, and perseverance.

Frequently mentioned attributions of this study showed similarities with the findings of relevant attribution research (Çağatay & Erten, 2020; Hussain et al., 2020; Li & Han, 2022; Safdar et al., 2023; 2022; Smith et al., 2020). Notably, the frequency of mentioned attributions did not change across the school types. Effort, interest, and ability were the top three mostly repeated attributions respectively, and luck was among the least repeated attributions in both success and failure conditions by the participants from all school types. Effort appears to be the most repeatedly mentioned attribution in both success and failure conditions by a majority of the participants, which shows similarities with the findings of studies in similar educational contexts (e.g., Chen, 2021; Chen, 2011; Lu et al., 2014. Particularly in the failure condition,

participants from all school types put effort, which is a typical attribution after experiencing failure, on the top of the list.

Ascribing success to ability is considered to be key to having an adaptive mindset as it promotes self-confidence. The findings imply that these students attribute success in an adaptive manner, with successful students believing that their accomplishments were the product of their high ability, which may relate to self-confidence and self-efficacy (Graham, 2022; Hatteberg, 2022). On the other hand, changing ability attribution in the failure condition, which refers to a maladaptive mindset, to lack of effort may increase perseverance and enhance performance (Graham & Chen, 2020). Therefore, this finding might be regarded as a healthier approach to outcomes in success but not in the failure condition. When learners ascribe their success and failure to effort, they tend to believe that they have control over their outcomes and this cause is related to themselves but not others. Likewise, stating a luck attribution as the least frequent one in success and failure conditions shows that participants have control over their performance. If the students believe that they have control over their outcomes, they might develop confidence, motivation and sense of mastery (Graham, 2022; Hatteberg, 2022). While certain attributes, like luck and ability, cannot be modified willingly by an individual, attributes like effort may (Weiner, 2000), and effort attribution is likely to result in sustained effort in the future (Anderman, 2020). Likewise, Lu et al.'s (2014) study, in which university level EFL learners in China participated, revealed effort attribution as the most frequently reported cause for failure and in success conditions. In their study, effort was significantly more important than ability attribution for the participants. Similarly, Gan et al.'s (2019) study, which focused on Chinese EFL learners' motivation to learn in the higher education context, revealed that effort received the highest mean score in comparison to other motivational aspects.

The open-ended question sought to uncover the subjective reasons of the participants for their success and failure perceptions. Participants appeared to have more responses in the failure condition than the success condition. The most frequent theme in both success and failure situations was environment. Ascribing failure to the environment, which is regarded as an uncontrollable and external factor, might lead to maladaptive mindsets, and often reveals relations to lower self-efficacy (Ngunu et al., 2019). The other most frequent theme for the success condition was relevant to life/career. The graduate group and Sino-American group are the only groups that mentioned relevant to life/career attribution as the most frequent one in the success condition. Also, these two groups were the only ones who never mentioned irrelevant to life/career attribution in the failure condition. Similarly, these two groups seem to have mentioned environment more often than the other school types in the success condition. This may be because these groups have more opportunities to interact in the target language, English might not be confined to the classroom for these groups, and they take learning English seriously for their future lives and career goals.

Lack of a language learning environment revealed to be the most prevalent cause of failure. As it was indicated the most frequent reason, this attribution did not demonstrate disparities across the different types of schools. The most frequent themes that emerged from the vocational group and undergraduate group were lack of interest, environment, and irrelevant to life/career.

Unlike graduate and Sino-American groups who seemed to closely relate English to their future career, these two groups tended not to take English so seriously. According to Lu et al. (2014), this might be because students who major in fine art and physical science find that English courses are not as necessary as those in high school after they enter universities since they are more interested in their majors. Also, considering the fact that all participants are native Chinese speakers, they might rarely get the opportunity to interact with the target language in a Chinese environment.

For the success-oriented group CDSII scale results demonstrated more internal, personally controllable, stable, and moderately externally controllable attributional patterns. In the failure condition, attributional styles were considerably more internal and personally controllable. The mean score for the locus dimension proved to be the highest, followed by personal control. These dimensional styles are considered as adaptive mindsets (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Weiner, 1985;). When the learners attributed their success to internal, stable, and personally controllable causes, they have higher expectations for having the same successful performance. In the failure condition, when learners ascribed their weak performance to internal causes and when they believed that they had control over those causes, they tended to believe they could improve their performance in the future.

Success- and failure-oriented group comparisons showed that the success group had higher mean scores across all the dimensions. This finding is also parallel with the relevant literature, and it is considered to be a healthier approach to success. Higher scores on controllability have an impact on the value of success, which has an impact on each person's level of motivation for achievement (Graham, 2022). Similarly, higher scores on stability have an impact on success expectations (Weiner, 1985). Failure that is ascribed to stable internal uncontrolled factors will lead to a decrease in the desire for more action, whereas failure that is linked to unstable external controllable causes will not result in a decrease or even an increase in this desire. In this study, the aspects of locus and personal control had the highest mean scores in both groups. The locus, personal control, and stability aspects of the success and failure groups were significantly different. Given that both groups' perception was in the range of moderate, there was no significant variation in the external controllability dimension. The success group appeared to have more internal, personally controllable, and stable attributions when mean scores were considered. Similarly, Lu et al. (2014) noted that, there were differences between successful and unsuccessful learners in the relevant literature in the Chinese EFL contexts. In their study, effective learners preferred to credit successful outcomes more to internal and unstable causes. The findings of their study and this study seem to be similar in locus dimension but differ in the stability dimension. EFL learners in this study seem to hold healthy attributional styles with more internal, personally controllable, stable dimensions in the success condition, and with more internal, personally controllable, and unstable dimensions in the failure condition.

Significant differences were found for the dimensions of external control and stability in the analysis of differences in terms of dimensions across school types in the success condition. Regarding locus and personal control aspects, school types did not differ much from one

another. Compared to the Sino-American group, the graduate group exhibited much more stable attributions, which is accepted as a healthy mindset when success is experienced. Both the Vocational College and Undergraduate groups showed significantly higher externally controllable attributions than the Sino-American group in terms of the external control component. It can be inferred that the higher the education level, the healthier the attributions were in the success condition. Also, the Sino-American context appeared to make learners believe that they had more control over their success outcomes, which is considered a healthier mindset. In contrast, the vocational college and undergraduate groups tended to owe their achievements in English to the externally controllable factors, which might signal less hope for future success because external ascription seemed to hinder learning motivation, enthusiasm, and retention in the language learning process (Li, 2004).

Only the locus dimension showed substantial variations in the failure condition. The Sino-American group had significantly higher internal scores than the Vocational School group, who had the highest scores for the external control dimension, for their ascriptions to failure. It can be concluded that the Sino-American group holds healthier attributional styles compared to the other group. The learners in the Sino-American context are aware that they are experiencing failure due to themselves, not something external and uncontrollable. Therefore, they might have positive expectations regarding their future performance. Internal ascriptions after experiencing failure give learners chances to change their future behaviors in a way to improve their performances. The reason behind this significant difference between these school types could be related to contextual factors.

In general, the findings of the nine-point-Likert CDSII revealed moderate scores both in failure and success conditions. The scores ranged from 4.77, as the lowest score in the failure condition for external control, to 6.53, as the highest score in the success condition for personal control dimension. The reason why there were no high scores like 9 or 8, or low scores like 2 or 3 might be due to the cultural factors. Similarly, significantly higher perception of failure might reflect cultural aspects. Tian (2012) noted that Lao Tzu and Confucius and other thinkers' humble ideas demonstrated modesty as a classic Chinese virtue. They were always humble and believed that their standing was quite low when they received praise from others. They frequently exhibited a reserved and modest demeanor when it came to academics and interpersonal interactions. Similarly, Zhou (2006) pointed out that modesty was viewed as the manifestation of politeness in cross-cultural communication. One should depreciate oneself and be modest while talking about himself or herself, other people, or items that are connected to them. Respect is lifted when referring to the listener or to individuals or objects associated with the listener. The speaking party in Chinese typically addresses himself in a modest manner and refers to the other party using honorifics to convey respect. Honorific and modest words are significant manifestations of humility in Chinese. Unlike Western cultures, Chinese culture emphasizes the need for perfect morals, modesty, and caution. Despite the remarkable accomplishments, the standards are still far from optimal (Zhou, 2006). Being modest, prudent, and moderate are essential characteristics of this culture. While humility helps people advance, boasting hurts since it causes people to lag behind (Bi, 1996).

Implications

The causal explanations that students gave for their success and failure outcomes, particularly in the context of language learning, could be used to forecast the actions they will take in their subsequent learning process and their future success. This is only conceivable if educators can distinguish between failure brought on by lack of ability and failure brought on by lack of effort (Graham & Taylor, 2022). As attribution theory integrates correlates of motivation constructs within the theoretical model, it may be able to offer direction at this stage (Anderman, 2020).

This study might offer implications for language instructors. Language instructors are more likely to be able to observe each student's behavior individually, so they can place more attention on individuals in the classroom rather than groups since students' attribution and learning motivation is a complicated psychological habit. Chinese English learners are diverse (You & Dörnyei, 2016), and their motivational factors change depending on the learning environment (Xu & Gao, 2014; Li, 2014;). Therefore, different institutions might have different effects on learners' perceptions of success and causal dimensionality styles. EFL instructors should be more aware of these factors and provide assistance for their learners accordingly. The instructors might encourage and help students to do self-reflection and retrain attributions in a supportive learning environment. Perry et al. (2014) as well as Graham (2020) highlight the significance of viewing academic successes as controllable and failures as unstable. Doing so helps with motivation, emotion, persistence, and performance. At this point, attribution retraining provided by the instructors might reveal positive outcomes. It is important to note that causal dimensions can provide clear instructions for retraining attributions (Graham, 2020). Language instructors should reassure their students that they genuinely have influence over their results by being aware of their students' maladaptive attributional practices (Zhang et al., 2021).

There are limitations in this research. First, answers to open-ended questions only provided a limited amount of information regarding the participants' unique attributions. For in-depth information on the attributions of EFL learners, future research may employ a phenomenological approach via one-on-one interviews with the participants. Furthermore, it is limited to circumstances related to higher education. However, English is taught to EFL students in China from a young age. In this regard, the study ignores the possibility that attribution patterns may be shaped by early experiences of the learners of English in diverse contexts.

In conclusion, this study provides comprehensive insights on the perceptions, attributions, and causal dimensionality patterns of EFL learners, which are essential for understanding the motivational factors behind language learning. A significant percentage of participants thought they were unsuccessful English learners, even though success was more often attributed to healthy traits like effort and interest and rarely to outside variables like teachers or luck. The qualitative analysis underscores the significance of the environment and relevance to life and career in shaping learners' attributions while learning English. A closer look finds different attributional patterns for different school types, with Sino-American and graduate groups

strongly associating English skill with future employment. Furthermore, attributional style variations reveal how the educational atmosphere affects learners' thinking, with the Sino-American group displaying healthier attributional patterns. The moderate scores in the causal dimensionality scale across conditions underscore the influence of cultural factors. All things considered, these results highlight how critical it is to take cultural factors and educational settings into account when developing more positive attitudes and motivation for language acquisition.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial conflicts of interests to disclose.

Data Availability

The electronic data is stored in private Google Drive folder of the researchers. Data will be available via e-mail to the corresponding author.

Ethical Approval

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Author Contributions

Ayse Taskiran contributed to the manuscript by designing the study, reviewing the literature, writing the research questions, preparing the data collection instruments, analyzing the data and writing the findings, discussions, and the implications.

Hong Pan contributed to the manuscript by reviewing the literature, preparing the data collection instruments, analyzing the data and writing the findings, discussions, and the implications.

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Intercultural Communication: The Perceptions of Lebanese High School Directors

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Abstract

Because intercultural communication has become one of the most demanded skills in the current digitalized world, many educational institutions aspire to graduate students who possess intercultural skills and are able to successfully communicate with people from diverse cultures. However, intercultural communication has not received much attention in the Lebanese context, especially in schools. To this end, this paper examined the Lebanese high school directors' perceptions of intercultural communication. As pragmatists, the researchers employed quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand the problem under investigation. Using a snowball sampling, they surveyed the perceptions of 55 Lebanese directors in private and public high schools and interviewed two informants in the Center for Educational Research and Development. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Then, the derived conclusions were compared to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. Major findings showed that though intercultural communication is a learning outcome in most schools, it is mostly taught at the knowledge level in the foreign language classrooms. Assessment of this outcome was neither systematic nor consistent. It was also shown that directors in private schools tended to be more informed than those in the public sector. Recommendations are made for enhancing intercultural communication skills in Lebanese educational institutions.

Keywords: cultural diversity, curriculum design, intercultural communication, intercultural competence, Lebanon, schools

Developing intercultural competence is paramount in the globalized world. In fact, many scholars have stressed the importance of graduating interculturally competent communicators who are able to interact with multicultural customers, colleagues, and partners within and across international borders (Gün, 2023; Saba 'Ayon & Harb, 2022a; Winstead, 2021). For example, Gün (2023) states that as the world has turned into a global village with advanced technological means for communication, it becomes customary for people from diverse cultures to communicate, rendering intercultural communication a necessary skill to be learned (p. 2780). In addition, Saba 'Ayon and Harb (2022b, p. 3347) assert that there is a need to graduate global citizens who understand the nuances of otherness to succeed in communicating effectively with multicultural people and hence meet the demands of the digitalized world. Winstead (2021) stipulates that effective intercultural communication is a must in today's workplaces as an increasing number of company leaders "prioritize diversity and inclusion in their workplaces" (para. 1).

Unfortunately, intercultural education is not explicitly stated in the national Lebanese school or higher education curricula. The only reference to it is in the schools' foreign language curriculum as cultural awareness. However, it is limited to the English-speaking culture, and its main purpose is to help Lebanese students recognize the similarities and differences between their culture and the target culture (New National Curriculum, 1997, p. 147). This raised the researchers' curiosity and concern about the absence of such an indispensable objective from the Lebanese curricula. To this end, the researchers aimed to investigate the Lebanese educators' perceptions of intercultural communication and its status in the Lebanese high schools. The importance of the study lies in its being among the first to address this topic from the perspectives of Lebanese educators.

Theoretical Framework: Intercultural Communicative Competence

The study draws from Byram's (1997; 2021) and Deardorff's (2004; 2006) understanding of intercultural competence and is based on Byram's intercultural communicative competence (ICC) model. Byram's (1997; 2021) ICC was selected for the study because it focuses on the role of foreign language education in developing students' ICC as a learning outcome, hence aligning with intercultural learning found in the Lebanese context.

Terms and Definitions

It is worth noting that several terms are used to refer to intercultural competence in the literature, among which are intercultural communicative competence, intercultural dialogue, and global citizenship (See Saba 'Ayon & Harb, 2022a). According to Deardorff (2015), these terms are even discipline-specific. For example, ICC is used in language learning, while intercultural competence is used in the field of education in general. However, due to their similarity, they are sometimes used interchangeably.

In addition, scholars define intercultural competence differently (See Byram, 1997; Council of Europe, 2007; Deardorff 2004; 2006; Dypedahl, 2019; UNESCO, 2013). For example,

UNESCO (2013), citing Byram (1997; 2008), defines intercultural competence as "having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures" (p. 16). This definition indicates that the main components of intercultural competence are, therefore, knowledge, skills, and attitude. Deardorff (2004) also includes these components in her intercultural competence model, which serves as an operational framework that can be implemented in educational institutions.

According to Deardorff (2004; 2006), embracing a curious, respectful, and open attitude and building knowledge that includes cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic awareness, and deep cultural understanding leads to the targeted intercultural competence-related outcomes. The internal outcomes are the ability to empathize, adapt, assume an ethnorelative view, and be flexible, and these manifest in the external outcome as suitable and effective communication and behavior in each intercultural situation. Therefore, intercultural competence is essentially about enhancing interactions between people who are different within the same society or across borders (Deardorff, 2020, p. 5). In other words, cultural difference does not merely refer to differences in nationality or geography but includes any type of differences within a society such as age, gender, and religion among others.

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Model

Within educational institutions, intercultural competence is commonly targeted in foreign language programs and demonstrated in people's communication skills and interactions. Byram (1997; 2021; See also Porto & Byram, 2015; Wagner & Byram, 2017) has worked extensively on the ICC model to guide curriculum designers and teachers in their teaching and assessment practices. The model includes the following five dimensions: 1) Knowledge about one's social group and culture as well as that of the other in addition to knowledge on how to navigate societal and individual interactions; 2) An attitude that is willing to both consider the others' behaviors, values, and beliefs and analyze them from their perspectives (Byram, 2021, p. 45); 3) Education, as it serves a pivotal role in developing ICC, and educational institutions have a role in building knowledge and developing critical cultural awareness and the skills needed for intercultural interactions and experiences; 4) The skills to interpret and relate during interactions between people and while working on a document; 5) The skills to discover, which Byram (2021) defines as "the ability to recognise significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations and their relationship to other phenomena" (p. 49).

Educators can support learners in achieving ICC by developing critical cultural awareness in the classroom. Byram (2021) defines critical cultural awareness as "the ability to critique one's own way of thinking and acting and how this is influenced by societal factors" (p. 45). Porto and Byram (2015) explain that criticality should not be confused with criticism; it is the ability to analyze both weaknesses and strengths as well as to seek to deeply comprehend the other's

point of view. Criticality requires reasoning, argumentation, and evaluative analysis as the individual engages with people or texts from a different culture (Byram, 2021).

The Role of the Educational Setting in Developing Intercultural Competence

The education setting has been recommended as the most effective venue for beginning the journey of developing intercultural competence (Al-Sumait et al., 2022; Byram, 2021; UNESCO, 2013). This has motivated institutions and organizations to revamp their national curricula, specifically their foreign language (FL) in some contexts and develop frameworks as well as models for targeting intercultural competence. A systematic approach that includes a clear definition and a guiding model or framework is helpful for educators because it ensures that they are clear about which aspects of culture should be addressed, and it creates an environment inside and outside the classroom that facilitates knowledge building and the development of intercultural communication skills.

To successfully target ICC as a learning outcome in the FL classroom, educators need to redefine FL education, examine teachers' beliefs and understanding, set educational policies, provide guides for effective pedagogical approaches, and foster a school culture that celebrates cultural diversity. For instance, Malazonia and colleagues (2018) investigated how the school culture, teachers' ICC and style of teaching and learning affect students' view of cultural diversity and quality of intercultural education in Georgian schools. They found that intercultural education is not effective because of the lack of a suitable learning environment, resources, and pedagogical approaches.

Redefining Foreign Language Education

The value of learning a FL today goes beyond the practical purposes of communicating with those who do not speak one's native language; therefore, the objectives of teaching foreign languages need to be redefined. According to Porto and Byram (2015), the responsibility of FL instructors should not be limited to the teaching of communication skills; instead, it should educate learners about the values of criticality and humanistic education (p. 10). These authors assert that the purpose of learning a FL should not only be instrumentally motivated but also be approached as a way to improve at the personal and societal level.

The FL classroom should serve as an environment for developing criticality, an important component of ICC. Porto and Byram (2015) argue that the FL classroom should foster criticality and direct learners towards taking action to improve society. Byram (2021) contends that FL classrooms in a general education institution have an obligation to build critical awareness of the values and importance of cultural practices in one's country as well as of those in the other's (p. 57). Critical cultural awareness is the key to developing the components of ICC in learners.

Examining Teachers' Beliefs and Understanding of ICC

Teachers' beliefs and understanding of ICC affect their ability to target the inherent components of ICC as learning outcomes. Ensuring the development of a teacher's intercultural competence should be a component of their education and teacher training. In fact, Ishida (2023) states that developing teachers' and administrators' ICC is an urgent challenge in the current global world (p. 13). Gün (2023), for example, assessed pre-service teachers' intercultural competence and cultural component perspectives in a Turkish university and examined whether gender, year of study, and grade point average (GPA) could be variables that relate to variation in the participants' scores. The findings showed that the pre-service teachers generally scored high. Though gender and GPA could impact the participants' scores, there was no significant correlation between the year of study and the scores. Gün (2023) recommends that English language teaching programs include ICC courses in their curricula to increase student teachers' ICC instead of leaving it to personal experiences, individual opportunities, and luck in the student teachers' lives (p. 2796).

That teacher training needs to target knowledge of intercultural communication more explicitly and effectively is also reinforced by Mardešić (2023), who found that the participants, student-teachers of English, French, and Italian, failed to draw connections between language and culture although these concepts are mentioned in the Common European Framework of Reference. Similarly, Sańczyk-Cruz (2023) suggests that language teacher education include more "systemic intercultural exposure" by adding more intercultural education courses, creating more inclusive environment for student teachers, and providing more professional opportunities for lecturers among others (p. 33).

Developing teachers' knowledge of intercultural communication, however, is not sufficient to ensure proper implementation and effective teaching practices. In fact, Nafisah and colleagues (2024), who in their systematic review examined the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in incorporating ICC into their language classes, found a discrepancy between these teachers' perceptions of ICC and their classroom practice due to several factors such as rigid curricula, time constraints, and vague teaching strategies (p. 16). That is why these authors recommend "bridging the gap between teachers' perceptions and practices [which] demands a holistic strategy that aligns theoretical acknowledgement with practical implementation" (Nafisah et al., 2024, p.17). Similarly, Tiurikova and Haukås (2022) examined teachers' beliefs and conceptualizations of three concepts, namely multilingualism, intercultural competence, and identity, using the Norwegian national curriculum for foreign languages as a point of reference. The interviews with the teachers showed that they understand these concepts but have a limited understanding of their connection in their teaching practices. The authors recommended that teacher education provide student teachers with more knowledge as well as training on how to teach these phenomena, in combination or in isolation.

Teaching ICC in Educational Policies and Curricula

Teachers need policy documents, a well-designed curriculum and syllabus, textbooks, and materials to effectively target ICC. Educators can support students in developing intercultural communicative competence by ensuring that their instructional material represents the various social groups in a country, which include those of low socio-economic backgrounds (Byram, 2021). The significance of such representation is to prompt learners through a reflexive methodology to "problematize a society's treatment of all its social groups" (p. 56) and thus question their society's attitude towards underprivileged ones (Byram, 2021). To illustrate, Byram (2021) gives an example from an EFL textbook taught in Germany of a fictional story about a Pakistani family that faces much racial prejudice in the neighborhood where they reside.

Integrating the cultural component in FL education would also include, as has traditionally been the case, the culture of the target language. For example, Ousiali and colleagues (2023) recognize the importance of including the cultures of English-speaking people in the EFL classroom in Morocco. Their study examined whether exposing Moroccan high school students in the EFL classroom to literary texts enhances their intercultural competence, and they found that learners' cultural awareness had slightly improved (Ousiali et al. 2023, p. 79).

Fostering a Classroom Environment for ICC

Other aspects of the classroom environment need to be considered when aiming to develop ICC. Schwarzenthal and colleagues (2020) examined how three types of cultural diversity climate in the classroom, namely multiculturalism, fostering contact and cooperation, and color-evasion, relate to students' intercultural competence in secondary schools in Germany. They found that each of the three types of climates has its strengths and can make valuable contributions towards developing ICC. It is also worth examining student perspectives and experiences to foster a classroom environment for ICC. Tarp (2017), for instance, who examined students' perspectives, found that the students' capacity to develop intercultural communication and learning outcomes is affected by their level of participation, willingness to share their insecurities, and acceptance of the risk of losing face and being wrong. In addition, Saba 'Ayon (2016), who investigated the impact of telecollaboration on students' ICC, found that the telecollaborative experience, which students enjoyed, improved their ICC as instances of Byram's (1997) learning objectives were noticeable in the participants' interactions with their partners. The author recommends that telecollaboration be incorporated in FL classes as it provides an opportunity for students to interact with diverse students in "real-life situations" (p. 116).

In a nutshell, helping students develop their ICC is dependent on several variables in the educational setting: redefining educational objectives, developing teachers' ICC, developing policies and appropriate curricula, and fostering a suitable environment conducive for ICC. Lebanon is a country whose history has been characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity.

It serves as the context under examination in the current study. A brief discussion of the historical context and education system and policy in Lebanon is provided below.

The Lebanese Context

Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, with an area of 10,452 square kilometers. It has been inhabited by different cultures and civilizations, from the ancient empire of the Akkadian to the Greek Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, then the Crusaders, the Ottoman Empire and finally the French Mandate. All left their marks on the Lebanese culture and population.

These cultures also contributed to the language diversity in Lebanon. For example, during the French Mandate in Lebanon (1918–1942), French was the official language in education and public offices. After the Mandate, Standard Arabic reassumed its role as the primary linguistic medium in journalistic, educational, and official contexts, while colloquial Lebanese Arabic is used in daily conversations among the Lebanese. Besides the Arabic varieties, other languages are used in Lebanon, the most spoken of which are French and English, reflecting both cultural influences and the Lebanese educational system (See Saba ‘Ayon & Harb, 2023).

Since April 1975, when civil war broke out in Lebanon, a sense of sectarianism has emerged. Even though the civil war ended in October 1991, sectarianism did not diminish. On the contrary, it increased to the extent that now each sect in Lebanon looks at itself as having their own “culture” (Deeb et. al., 2023) although ethnically, the Lebanese are almost of the same ethnic group except for the Armenians who came to Lebanon back in 1920, after the Armenian genocide.

Since 2011, Middle Eastern unrest has led to Lebanon sheltering Syrian refugees, besides the Palestinians. These refugees number approximately 2.5 million, constituting half the Lebanese population (*Lebanon*, n.d.). Moreover, many European and American families reside and work in Lebanon. Western missionaries, whether secular or religious, have been present in Lebanon for more than 160 years. These missionaries have established several educational institutions such as the International College, Brummana High school, and The Grand Lycée at the K-12 school level in addition to the American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University at the university level. These institutions have several international staff and students among their population. Moreover, a few international companies and embassies hire foreigners. All these factors render Lebanon fertile ground for intercultural communication and interaction.

Lebanese education operates on a K-12 system, culminating in high school graduation at approximately the age of 18. College-bound students start at the sophomore level, completing their bachelor’s in roughly three years. Post ninth grade, students opt for specialized tracks: mathematics, natural sciences, economics, or philosophy (Ayyash-Abdo et. al., 2009), which often determine their university majors. Lebanon's educational curriculum was initially fashioned after the French model during the French mandate (1920–1943) but integrated local subjects. While the 1968 revision retained the focus on knowledge acquisition, the 1997 update

prioritized hands-on experiences and critical thinking to better equip students in a post-civil war era (Frayha, 2003). This reform aimed to nurture unity, national pride, and values, like tolerance, democracy, and acceptance of others, among students (Center for Educational Research and Development[1] (CRDP)[2], 1997). The Lebanese Ministry of Education mandates this curriculum across all educational institutions, public and private.

According to Bahous and Nabahani (2008), Lebanon has three types of schools: public, run by the government; private run by independent institutions; and The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools that offer education to Palestinian refugees under the umbrella of the United Nations. While public state schools provide free education, the quality often lags behind that of private institutions (Bahous et al., 2022; Khafaja et al., 2020). Consequently, public schools predominantly serve students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bahous et al., 2022; World Bank Group, 2022). Conversely, families with the financial means opt for private schooling due to its perceived superior quality, evidenced by higher student achievement on national and university admissions exams. However, there is a fourth type, namely the semi-private school, which is partly free. These schools get funding from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to subsidize the tuition for its students (CRDP Lebanon, n.d.).

Advancements in Lebanese Curriculum: Standardized Action Plan and Operational Procedures

Since 2021, CRDP has been embarking on a new curriculum update. During 2020, interdisciplinary teams at the CRDP devised a comprehensive curriculum action plan, together with unified operational protocols. The update stemmed from the need to develop Lebanese citizens who are aware of the world around them and endowed with intercultural communication abilities (CRDP, 2023a).

Moreover, acknowledging the need for an intercultural citizen, the CRDP commenced the curriculum reform by developing the “Active Citizenship within Educational Curricula” which represents a paradigm shift from traditional pedagogical approaches employed in national education. This transformative initiative to entrench the beliefs of "active citizenship" into the modules and units of national education and civic socialization has given root for intercultural skills. Significantly, this pedagogical approach not only resonates with prevailing educational practices and student backgrounds but also mirrors the tangible cultural nuances present within the curriculum (CRDP, 2023b).

The study aimed to investigate intercultural communication in Lebanese high schools through the voices of Lebanese school directors as the above-mentioned curriculum reforms have not

[1] “A national institution concerned with educational modernization and development by setting educational plans and policies and directing educational curricula and requirements to build the citizen learner” (CRDP, n.d.).

[2] Acronym is in French and stands for “Centre de Recherche et de Développement Pédagogiques.” The older acronym in English (CERD) has recently been replaced by the French one.

been implemented yet. The overarching research question that this study set out to answer is the following: How do Lebanese directors in public and private high schools perceive intercultural communication (IC)? Three sub-questions followed:

1. To what extent does IC constitute a part of their school curricula?
2. How knowledgeable are the school directors about IC and its importance to Lebanese learners?
3. Are there any differences between the different types of schools in promoting IC?

Methodology and Methods

The researchers' emphasis was to examine and understand the problem under investigation and discern answers to the accompanying questions instead of focusing on methods per se (Creswell, 2007, p. 22). Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were utilized in the mixed-methods study to collect and analyze data (Creswell, 2007, p. 23). An online completion questionnaire was used to survey Lebanese school directors' perceptions of IC. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in CRDP.

Selection of Participants

The researchers employed snowballing sampling, which is one type of convenience sample, to select their participants, who were Lebanese private and public high school directors (Bryman, 2008, p. 699). The researchers resorted to this sampling technique after several attempts to reach school directors through either emails or phone calls. Then, the researchers made initial contact with a small group of directors and/or teachers that helped the researchers establish contacts with the participating directors.

The researchers asked 55 Lebanese high school directors to take part in the study after explaining its purpose and promising them confidentiality and anonymity. That number constituted approximately 9% of all Lebanese high schools (614 high schools in total) according to the Head of the Educational System Evaluation Unit in CRDP.

Data-Collection Instruments

To ensure that the questionnaire could reach as many school directors as possible and that it could be easily completed, it was not only shared on Google Forms but also presented in three languages, namely English, French, and Arabic (reflecting the linguistic diversity in Lebanon). This gave the participating directors the choice of filling out the questionnaire in their preferred language.

The questionnaire, adopted from Deardorff's 2006 institutional questionnaire on intercultural competence and the self-assessment questionnaire on the intercultural dimension of the school (www.intercultural-learning.eu/Portfolio-Item/self-assessment-questionnaire/), was initially constructed in English and later translated into French and Arabic. The translated versions were

verified by professional translators (English to Arabic and English to French). In addition, the researchers emailed the questionnaires to three high school directors from the selected sample for piloting, and necessary revisions were made based on the given feedback.

The inquiry form consisted of four main sections. The first section (12 multiple-choice items) elicited information about the participating high schools. The second (9 multiple-choice items, 3 yes/no items, and 2 completion items), and the third (15 rating-scale items) elicited information about the directors' perceptions. As to the last section, it was an open-ended question that provided the participating directors an opportunity to express their opinions freely on the topic under investigation and/or to bring up ideas that were excluded from the questionnaire. The calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient was above 0.8, which indicated a good internal consistency (Taber, 2017).

The researchers chose to conduct semi-structured interviews because they allowed a greater consideration of deep, rich data. To recruit the informants for the interviews, the researchers explained the purpose of the research to the Director of the CRDP, sent the interview questions for approval, and asked permission to mention the name of the center in the study. Next it was recommended that the Head of the English Department and the Coordinator of Joint Academic Departments be invited to take part in the research study. The interview with each respondent lasted 40-45 minutes. Afterwards, the transcriptions were sent to the participants for validation.

Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data from the three versions of the questionnaire were combined into one Excel file, and the French and Arabic data were translated into English. The translations were checked for accuracy by two professional translators. The excel file was then imported into SPSS (version 23), where descriptive analysis was run (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021)**.** The researchers also conducted correlation and cross-tabulation analyses to determine whether there were differences between how schools promote and assess intercultural communication. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed. In addition, the derived conclusions from both analyses were crosschecked to ensure trustworthiness of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

The findings, which include the analyses of the collected quantitative and qualitative data, are presented in four sub-sections, description of the participants and their schools, status of IC in the schools, directors' perceptions of the importance of IC to students, and differences among schools in promoting IC**.** The headings of the last three sections were derived from the research questions.

Description of the Participants and their Schools

Twenty-nine of the participants were private school directors, one was a director of a semi-private school, and the remaining 25 were public high school directors. The number of the

participating directors reflected the proportion of high schools in Lebanon, where the private high schools outnumber the public high schools, and semi-private mainly exist as primary schools (Head of the Educational System Evaluation Unit in CRDP).

The participants were directors of schools in different regions in Lebanon: the capital (21.8%), cities (21.8%), suburbs (14.5%), and villages (41.8%). The students in these schools came almost entirely from the same regions: from the capital (18.2%), from the cities (25.5%), from the suburbs (14.5%), and villages (41.8%). These schools were of different sizes in terms of student body: small (fewer than 500) (50.9%), moderate (500-700) (16.4%), and large (more than 700) (32.7%). The population in these schools (teachers, students, and staff) as described by the directors ranged from slightly diverse (21.8%) to very diverse (21.8%) with a moderately diverse majority (56.4%).

The number of foreign languages taught in these schools differs, ranging from one FL to thirteen, with a majority (65.5%) of students receiving education in two languages, English and French. These languages were not only taught in the FL class. They were also the medium of instruction in several subjects as per the Lebanese curriculum. The majority of these schools used the FL in teaching four to five subjects, the most selected of which were math, biology, physics, and chemistry. Other subjects taught in the FL were geography, history, economics, philosophy, sociology, computer, and civic education among others. It is worth noting that Arabic as a FL, offered in few elite high schools, is taught only in the foreign language class.

Status of IC in the Schools

Terminologies for IC

Though different terminologies were used by these schools to refer to IC, the more frequently used ones were intercultural dialogue, cross-cultural communication, intercultural understanding, and global learning among others (see Table 1 below). From the terminologies used, none referred to cultural awareness as described in the national school curriculum. This could be explained by the mismatch between the cultural awareness objective of 1997 curriculum and the content of the school textbook that the Head of the Department of English in CRDP referred to. She said, “Though there is a reference to cultural awareness in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, these were not translated into the detailed content. That is why cultural awareness objectives in the English Language curriculum are not taught deeply …but mere exposure to the differences between cultures,” that is at the knowledge level.

Table 1
Different Terminologies for Intercultural Communication

Items	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
intercultural education	11	8.7%	20.4%
intercultural learning	8	6.3%	14.8%
intercultural dialogue	27	21.3%	50.0%
cross-cultural communication	20	15.7%	37.0%
international competence	6	4.7%	11.1%
global learning	16	12.6%	29.6%
global citizenship	11	8.7%	20.4%
intercultural competence	7	5.5%	13.0%
intercultural understanding	18	14.2%	33.3%
other	3	2.4%	5.6%

Importance of IC in Schools

In response to a query regarding the degree to which intercultural communication was considered a desired student outcome at school, the majority of the participants (69.1%) regarded it as important while 27.3% denied its presence in their schools. The qualitative data, reflected by one respondent, could possibly explain the absence of this learning outcome in other schools, "In Lebanon and in public schools specifically, intercultural communication is missing." Conversely, IC was recognized as an important learning outcome by the majority of the respondents (80%) with very few (1.8%) rating it as not important. The qualitative data was in line with the quantitative figures as reflected by a respondent's comment, "The subject of cultural exchange is considered one of the important topics that should be emphasized by introducing it as a basic subject within the educational curricula because of its positive impact on the future of learners." These findings showed that the participants were aware of the importance of IC and acknowledged that the educational institutions should play an important role in developing these skills. (Al-Sumait et al., 2022; Byram, 2021; UNESCO, 2013).

Written Policies of IC in Schools

The quantitative data showed that most of the participating schools (36.4%) had no written policy on intercultural issues, 25.5% had policies related to international projects; 20% retained a policy related to providing assistance for speakers of other languages; and 14.5% held a policy about valuing minority languages. The qualitative data was consistent with the quantitative numbers as some respondents denied having written policies about IC while a few directors talked about a language policy and an inclusion policy. A small number referred to academic honesty and integrity policies as the only written policies they had in this regard. The absence of written policies in a curriculum that includes IC is a challenge and an impediment for educational institutions and teachers to systematically and meaningfully practice and develop these skills. In fact, the literature emphasizes the importance of these policies to support

teachers in helping their students develop their ICC (Byram, 2021; Ousaili et al., 2023). Models such as Byram's (2021), manuals such as Deardoff 's (2020), and frameworks such as *Key competences for lifelong learning, European reference framework* (*2007)* can serve as an anchor for schools to seriously and consistently target IC as learning outcomes.

Ways to promote IC

Though quite a number of the participating schools had the majority (23.6%) to half of their students (30.9%) experience difficulty in the FL, most intercultural learning or communication happened in the FL courses (67.3%). Extra- curricular activities (63.6%), classroom projects (61.8%), international projects (32.7%), and field trips or travels (29.1%) among others were also named as ways to promote IC (see Table 2 for more details).

Table 2
Ways Schools Promote Intercultural Learning

Items	Responses		Percent of cases
	N	Percent	
Foreign language courses	37	20.2%	67.3%
Courses (other than foreign language)	6	3.3%	10.9%
Classroom projects	34	18.6%	61.8%
Extracurricular activities	35	19.1%	63.6%
International projects	18	9.8%	32.7%
Study opportunities abroad	11	6.0%	20.0%
Class exchange programs	10	5.5%	18.2%
E-twinning programs	11	6.0%	20.0%
Field trips/travels	16	8.7%	29.1%
Other	5	2.7%	9.1%

The Head of the English Department in CRDP stated that cultural awareness was promoted in the EFL curriculum through themes such as "means of transport, food habits, holidays and celebration." She added that schools were also trying to include them through projects in the FL classes "like the Italian Language Project and Cultural Exchange Program by the British Council." This made the researchers wonder to what extent the students' difficulty in the FL could impede their understanding of the cultural concepts embedded in the FL class.

According to the coordinator of Joint Academic Departments in CRDP, promoting IC in the classroom depended greatly on individual efforts of motivated teachers. She gave an example of a success story of herself as a science teacher in a public high school in South Lebanon before joining the CRDP. She described her participation in an online project by UNESCO, entitled *Water for life:* "I partnered with schools in Egypt and Sweden to find solutions for the

problem of water worldwide. I implemented this project in grades 7 till 12, and we (teachers) used to share our students' experiences and learning. That's how we and our students in different countries learned from each other about finding solutions to water problems and more importantly about our countries and hence cultures." To her, "this illustrates how the motivation of the teacher in the public sector plays a role in seeking professional development and carrying out that training in the classroom."

Another respondent talked about her experience collaborating with a different educator in the UK, stating, "Working on the ISA (International School Award) Program (the joint classroom), which entailed carrying out 7 activities in Lebanon and at the same time in the UK was a life-changing experience for me as I played the role of the international coordinator. Through this program, our students learned many traditions pertinent to the British people and vice versa!" She added, "I am forever grateful for having the chance to communicate with British educators and for giving equal opportunity for my students to become global citizens. It helped me to develop professionally and widened my students' knowledge."

An additional participant raised an important issue related to the promotion of IC in schools. That participant openly talked about religion in Lebanon as a possible impediment to intercultural learning and addressed the role parents could play in complementing the learning that happens in schools, asserting, "sometimes religion is a barrier to intercultural learning, so the role of parents at home is very important to encourage this intercultural learning not only at school."

Assessment of IC

Though IC is promoted in most schools, only 25.5% of the participating schools assess students' intercultural communication skills. The results supported by the interview data showed that while IC was considered a learning outcome in most of the participating schools, it was not assessed by these schools as other learning outcomes were. This raises the question concerning the reason for the absence of systematic and objective assessment tasks. The Coordinator of the Joint Academic Departments clarified the lack of assessment of IC in most schools. She stated, "Unfortunately, there is no reference to formal assessment of intercultural learning in the national school curriculum; there are no rubrics to measure this outcome. Teachers, even in the FL classes, teach for the official exams. Hence, assessment is limited to sentence structure and language competencies." In addition, the quantitative data showed that schools used different assessment methods, but the most common were evaluations conducted by teachers in their specific courses (25.5%), interviews with students (23.6%), students' papers or presentations (18.2%), and teachers' observation of students (18.2%) among others (more information is presented in Table 3).

Table 3
Methods used in IC Assessment

Items	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Evaluation conducted by teachers' individual courses	14	15.4%	25.5%
Interviews with students	13	14.3%	23.6%
Student paper and/or presentation	10	11.0%	18.2%
Student journal/blogs/reflections	6	6.6%	10.9%
Custom-designed/adapted self-report instrument	1	1.1%	1.8%
Pre/post test	5	5.5%	9.1%
Ongoing assessment (specify)	3	3.3%	5.5%
Written test	3	3.3%	5.5%
E-portfolios	5	5.5%	9.1%
Observation of students in specific situations	10	11.0%	18.2%
Other (Please specify)	21	23.1%	38.2%

The interview data revealed that the effort to target this particular learning outcome relied heavily on an individual teacher's efforts. The Coordinator of the Joint Academic Departments stated that "Some motivated and enthusiastic teachers go beyond the required assessment and assign projects to their students about different cultures' food, costume, traditions and habits, through which they try to assess their students' knowledge about other cultures." This example not only illustrates the individual effort of the teacher but also reinforces the idea that cultural learning as well as assessment happens only at the knowledge level. A curriculum that clearly incorporates IC should ensure proper implementation of it in the classroom, consistency in assessment, and well-designed resources to support teacher's endeavors (Byram, 2021 and Deardoff, 2020).

Ways to Promote IC among Staff and Faculty

According to the participating directors, the most adopted methods schools use to help their staff and teachers develop IC are workshops (36.4%), courses (20%), and in-service training (16.4%). It is noteworthy that numerous schools (27.3%) did nothing in this regard. The Head of the English Department in CRDP clarified that "training is not currently provided to programs that seek to compensate for learning loss due to several factors that affected the coursework in public schools such as COVID, port explosion, the economic crisis and its consequences.*"* When questioned how training and follow-up were conducted, she said that CRDP was responsible for training the teachers in schools, whereas the follow-up was the responsibility of the DOBS[3] [Pedagogical and Scholastic Guidance Office]. Upon probing about whether these DOBS received the same training or were aware of the training on which

[3] Acronym is in French. DOPS stands for Direction d'Orientation Pe'dagogique et Scolaire

they needed to follow-up, the Head of the Department replied, "Not necessarily" and added that this issue had caused some problems between the center and the DOBS, which they were trying to resolve. The Coordinator of the Joint Academic Departments also said, "There should be more coordination between the two processes, namely training and coaching. The trainers in the center should collaborate with the coaches in schools to ensure proper follow-up. Currently, when teachers receive training, there is no system to follow-up on what they do in class. Hence, it depends on the teacher's motivation to implement that training in the classroom". In fact, this idea was confirmed by one participant who recommended that "staff, teachers, and students be given monetary and moral incentives to motivate them to participate in educational workshops".

This raises many questions about the kind of training and the type of development the teachers receive, how consistent the training and the follow-up are, and how helpful they are to the teachers. As presented in the literature, though teacher training is important, supervision of teacher practice is a must to ensure effective implementation of IC in class, and therefore helping students develop their ICC (Gün, 2023; Ishida, 2023; Mardešić, 2023; Nafiseh et al., 2024; Tiurikova & Haukås; 2022).

Directors' Perceptions of the Importance of IC to Students

Most of the participating directors seemed knowledgeable about the importance of intercultural communication to Lebanese learners. In fact, most of these respondents were aware of the most common advantages of having IC in the school curriculum, namely helping students communicate with diverse people (81.8%) and enabling students to work in a multicultural workplace (80%). However, fewer directors were aware of the importance of IC in developing tolerance and understanding of others (58.2%) and in ensuring equity, peace, and inclusion (52.7%). The qualitative data added insights to the quantitative data. One of the participants stated that *"*No matter how hard we work on promoting intercultural education among youth, no peace and equity will be maintained as long as corrupt rulers are ruining the bridges built or using these bridges for bad goals." These findings reveal the importance of a proper education on ICC in terms of developing critical awareness (Byram, 2021) and approaching ICC as a skill to be practiced in real life (Dervin & Yuan, 2022).

One of the reasons why some participating directors were more informed than others could be related to their participation in international projects that promote intercultural communication or learning. In more details, approximately one third of the directors (30.9%) participated in such an experience. Some of the named projects as reflected in the qualitative data were UNESCO Peace Education Program, UNESCO Conflict Resolution between countries, British Council International School Award, Compassion Summit, E-twinning, and International Youth Days. Another reason is the school's contact with external providers. In fact, only 27.3% of the participating schools had contacts with external providers of intercultural services, among which were Jesuite France, American Montessori Society, British Council, USAID Program.

The qualitative data was in line with the quantitative data. In fact, one respondent stated that "some high schools are kept away from collaborating with important and effective associations." However, one respondent who seemed to have contacts with international organizations talked about the positive impact of external providers on their school, "Despite the barriers in the Lebanese society, our school is a key player in promoting communication and cultural exchange. We are committed to being open, valuing diversity, and contributing to a peaceful global community, which aligns with the goals of global organizations that work to overcome human-made barriers."

Differences Among Schools in Promoting IC

Though there was no significant correlation between the type of school and the importance of IC as a desired learning outcome, cross-tabulations showed some differences between the private and public schools. In detail, the cross-tabulation between the type of school and the advantages of including IC in the school curriculum showed that the directors of the private schools were more aware of these advantages than those of the public ones as seen in Table 4 below. This could be related to the directors' taking part in international projects and/or having contacts with external providers.

Table 4

Cross-Tabulation between Type of School and Advantages of IC in the School Curriculum

			School			
			Private	**Semi-private**	**Public**	**Total**
Advantages of including IC in your school[a]	Help students communicate with diverse people	Count % within Q1	25 86.2%	1 100.0%	19 76.0%	45
	Enable students to work in a multicultural workplace	Count % within Q1	24 82.8%	1 100.0%	19 76.0%	44
	Help students develop tolerance and understanding	Count % within Q1	20 69.0%	0 0.0%	12 48.0%	32
	Ensure equity, peace, and inclusion	Count % within Q	16 55.2%	1 100.0%	12 48.0%	29
Total		Count	29	1	25	55

Percentages and totals are based on respondents
(Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1)

The cross-tabulation between the type of school and the ways schools actively promote intercultural learning showed higher percentages for the private than the public schools as seen in Table 5. This could be related to the absence of IC as a learning outcome in public schools.

Table 5

Cross-Tabulation between Type of School and Ways Schools Use to Promote IC

			School			
			Private	**Semi-private**	**Public**	**Total**
In what ways does your school actively promote intercultural learning? [a]	Foreign language course	Count % within Q1	23 79.3%	1 100.0%	13 52.0%	37
	Courses (other than foreign language)	Count % within Q1	4 13.8%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	6
	Classroom projects	Count % within Q1	22 75.9%	0 0.0%	12 48.0%	34
	Extracurricular activities	Count % within Q1	19 65.5%	1 100.0%	5 60.0%	35
	International projects	Count % within Q1	12 41.4%	1 100.0%	5 20.0%	18
	Study opportunities abroad	Count % within Q1	6 20.7%	1 100.0%	4 16.0%	11
	Class exchange programs	Count % within Q1	6 20.7%	1 100.0%	3 12.0%	10
	E-twinning programs	Count % within Q1	6 20.7%	1 100.0%	4 16.0%	11
	Field trips/travel	Count % within Q1	10 34.5%	1 100.0%	5 20.0%	16
	Other (please specify)	Count % within Q1	1 3.4%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	2
	Not applicable	Count % within Q1	3 10.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3
Total		Count	29	1	25	55

Percentages and totals are based on respondents
(Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1)

The cross-tabulation between the type of school and assessment methods showed that the private sector was higher in some tools. More specifically, evaluation conducted by teachers in individual courses, interviews with students, student paper and/or presentation, student journal/blogs/reflections, written test, e-portfolios and observation of students in specific situations by teachers and supervisors appeared to provide significant support. Alternatively, the public schools were only slightly higher in pre/post-test and on-going assessment (see Table 6 below).

Table 6

Cross-Tabulation between Type of School and Assessment Method

			School			Total
			Private	Semi-private	Public	
If your school is assessing intercultural communication, what specific tools does it utilize in measuring it? [a]	Evaluation conducted by teachers in individual courses	Count % within Q1	9 31.0%	0 0.0%	5 20.0%	14
	Interviews with students	Count % within Q1	7 24.1%	0 0.0%	6 24.0%	13
	Student paper and/or presentation	Count % within Q1	6 20.7%	0 0.0%	4 16.0%	10
	Student journal/blog/reflections	Count % within Q1	4 13.8%	0 0.0%	2 8.0%	6
	Custom-designed/adapted self-report instrument	Count % within Q1	1 3.4%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1
	Pre/post test	Count % within Q1	2 6.9%	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	5
	Ongoing assessment (specify)	Count % within Q1	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	3
	Written test	Count % within Q1	2 6.9%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	3
	E-portfolios	Count % within Q1	4 13.8%	0 0.0%	1 4.0%	5
	Observation of students in specific situations (by teachers, supervisors, etc.)	Count % within Q1	7 24.1%	0 0.0%	3 12.0%	10
	Other (please specify)	Count % within Q1	10 34.5%	1 100.0%	10 40.0%	21
Total		Count	29	1	25	55

Percentages and totals are based on respondents
(Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1)

As presented earlier, the assessment of students' IC is neither systematic nor formal in almost all schools and much dependent on the individual teacher's motivation. As teachers in the private sector receive more training and are expected to use student-centered approaches, this could explain why teachers in the private sector use more creative assessment methods than traditional written exams.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated Lebanese high school directors' perceptions of intercultural communication (IC) in their schools. Specifically, it examined how knowledgeable they are about IC and its importance to the students, as well as how grounded this skill is in their curriculum, teaching practices, and campus culture. The data included questionnaires completed by 55 participants and two semi-structured interviews with the Head of the English Department and the Coordinator of Joint Academic Departments. The findings have shown that almost all the participating schools are aware of IC though they use various terms to refer to it. Although the participants recognize the importance of teaching IC, its components are not clearly defined and incorporated into the curriculum. In fact, intercultural learning, mostly happening in the FL classroom, is restricted to similarities and/or differences between cultures at the knowledge level and is not systematically assessed. This is not conducive enough for students to develop IC effectively and consistently because there is more than knowledge to IC; learners need to develop the right attitude and skills (Byram, 2021). That's why Porto and Byram (2015) contend that teachers of foreign languages have a responsibility to support learners in developing the right attitude and criticality as part of their journey to developing their IC.

Though the directors of the private schools have shown themselves to be more knowledgeable about these skills, their awareness about the importance of critical cultural awareness in ensuring a just, equal, and plural society still needs to be raised. The findings have also shown that private schools promote and assess IC more than the public ones, and that individual teachers, guided by their enthusiasm and interest in IC, are more proactive in this sense. Such efforts are not sufficient for graduating interculturally competent individuals to build a peaceful, tolerant society and serve as global citizens.

Due to the non-probability sample and the self-reporting instruments, the researchers do not attempt to generalize the findings, but data crosschecking contributed to their trustworthiness. Based on the derived conclusions, the researchers recommend that a more systematic approach to teaching IC be incorporated in the Lebanese curriculum. Moreover, they suggest that there be a guiding framework of reference that caters to IC and that is suitable for the unique Lebanese context, which has suffered a long history of political, economic, and social instability. This framework should include not only knowledge, which has been insufficient, but also other dimensions, namely attitude, skills to discover and relate, as well as proper education that are crucial to successfully develop these competencies (Byram, 1997; 2021). In addition, the gaps found in the current curriculum should be closed by translating the objectives into concrete learning outcomes, promoting IC beyond the FL classes to other subjects, encouraging multidisciplinary projects, creating appropriate instructional materials, and mandating systematic assessment of these outcomes. Lebanese educators should also receive enough training on incorporating IC in their classrooms, and there should be a close coordination between the trainers and coaches in schools to ensure proper follow-up of the new strategies implemented in the classrooms. Similar to the private sector, public schools should be provided with opportunities to collaborate with external providers of intercultural services.

Finally, future research should investigate the perceptions of more diverse populations, most important of whom are teachers in the public and private sectors due to the significant role they play in the teaching/ learning process.

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Roles of Gender and Academic Discipline in English for Specific Purposes

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Abstract

Acknowledging the critical role of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in shaping professional and academic success across various fields, the research delved into the nuanced interplay between gender and academic discipline in shaping the ESP needs of higher education students. The study investigated the impact of gender and academic discipline on Chilean dentistry and business administration students' perceived lack, want, and need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Drawing on sociocultural theory and self-determination theory, a mixed-methods model that involved data collected from 94 dentistry and 121 business administration students was adopted. Findings revealed significant gender differences: males reported greater perceived lack, whereas females exhibited higher want and need for English, suggesting gender influences ESP perception and necessitates customized learning strategies. Contrarily, academic discipline did not significantly affect ESP perceptions, challenging assumptions that ESP needs are strictly discipline-dependent and highlighting a generalized demand for English proficiency across fields. The findings demonstrated the importance of gender-sensitive and flexible ESP programs that cater to diverse learner needs while considering broader educational and individual factors. The study implies that educational practitioners should develop ESP curricula that not only address specific professional terminologies and situations but also reflect an understanding of the roles gender and discipline play in language learning. This approach could foster more effective and inclusive language education tailored to the varied aspirations and requirements of students in different fields.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, gender differences, academic discipline, Chilean students, mixed-methods, curriculum development

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a cornerstone in the realm of English language learning, addressing the tailored needs of learners across various academic and professional domains. Contrasting general English, ESP focuses on the linguistic requirements of specific fields, thereby facilitating more effective communication within particular contexts. For instance, Business English, as explored by Meng et al. (2023) and Lasekan et al. (2024) equips individuals with the terminologies and conversational strategies pertinent to the business sector, enhancing their global market competencies. Similarly, legal English education, as highlighted by Northcott (2012) prepares legal professionals with the specialized language necessary for legal proceedings and documentation, essential for accuracy and efficacy in the field. Furthermore, the importance of ESP extends to academic settings, where English for Academic Purposes (EAP) supports students and researchers in navigating the academic discourse, significantly impacting their scholarly pursuits and collaborations. The distinction and application of ESP in fields like business, law, and academia reinforce its crucial role in bridging language gaps, fostering professional growth, and advancing academic success (Meng et al., 2023; Northcott, 2012).

The significance of language proficiency in academic and professional contexts serves as a critical determinant of success, bridging the gap between knowledge acquisition and practical application. Research by Rose et al. (2020) emphasized that English language proficiency, coupled with academic skills and motivation, significantly influences success in English-medium instruction, underscoring the interplay between linguistic capabilities and academic achievements. Such correlation aligns with the findings of Tai & Zhao (2022), who asserted that factors such as motivation and language learning strategies, rather than merely the medium of instruction during secondary education, are pivotal in enhancing students' academic English proficiency at the university level. Additionally, the role of English language competency extends beyond the academic realm, impacting professional mobility and career advancement, as demonstrated in studies focusing on professional environments (Hu, 2018). Ting et al. (2017) further highlighted the trend where English proficiency is increasingly viewed as an asset, enhancing employability and workplace efficiency. Such comprehensive perspective underlines the integral role of English proficiency not only in facilitating academic success but also in propelling professional growth across various disciplines and global markets.

Research into gender differences in language learning, particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), reveals insights that stress the necessity of tailoring educational programs to diverse learner needs. Chen & Hung (2015) stated that, in Taiwan, university students enrolled in ESP courses showed distinct learning style preferences influenced significantly by gender, with female students demonstrating a stronger preference for kinesthetic and auditory learning modalities compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, the study by Sojoodizadeh et al. (2020) further illuminated the gender-based distinction in the realm of language learning, revealing that female medical students held higher expectations than males regarding the translation of texts and comprehension support in English, indicating a potential need for more customized language instruction strategies. These findings collectively emphasized the importance of integrating diverse teaching methodologies and resources in ESP courses to cater to the varied learning styles, motivations, and expectations

of both male and female students, thereby augmenting the overall effectiveness of language acquisition and educational outcomes.

The language needs across different academic disciplines demonstrate considerable variation, reflecting the unique challenges faced by students and professionals. In the arts, students primarily engage with creative processes, necessitating English skills that enable artistic expression and critique, significantly diverging from standard linguistic applications (Tseng, 2015). Conversely, business administration students are immersed in a specialized language milieu, necessitating proficiency in business English to navigate corporate communications, negotiations, and management effectively (Gaye, 2015). Meanwhile, students in science and engineering disciplines require English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tailored to their field's technical terminology and discourse styles, essential for understanding scientific texts and writing research papers (Gholaminejad, 2022). Dentistry students, similarly, face distinct language requirements, needing English for Dental Purposes (EDP) to communicate complex medical terms and patient instructions effectively (Arani, 2017). Such discipline-specific language requirement underscores the importance of customized English language education, suggesting that educators and curriculum developers must design ESP courses that cater specifically to the varying needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students across diverse fields (Köse et al., 2019), thereby moving away from a one-size-fits-all model to a more apropos educational strategy that addresses the specific English language needs of each academic discipline.

While existing research, such as the work of Cooper et al. (2022) has explored discrimination and discipline inequities in educational settings, and Leighton (2020) has delved into class and gender dynamics within academic communities, there remains a significant gap concerning the intersectionality of gender and academic discipline, especially in relation to the need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Consequently, this study aimed to bridge these gaps by examining how gender influences ESP needs across various disciplines, recognizing that gender can significantly impact learning styles, motivations, and outcomes, thus affecting ESP program effectiveness. Furthermore, despite the insights offered by Mancho Barés & Arnó Macià (2017) on EMI lecturer training and the language needs across disciplines, and Wijayanti & Nugroho (2021) on the specific ESP requirements in automotive technology, the differences between male and female learners within these disciplines remain underexplored. Additionally, the literature has not adequately addressed how gender identity and minoritization, as discussed by Runa et al. (2023), affect students' sense of belonging and motivation in learning environments, particularly within the ESP context. By integrating these diverse strands of research, the study seeks to contribute to the field by heightening understanding of the specific language learning needs at the confluence of gender and academic discipline, thereby informing the development of more appropriate and inclusive ESP curricula, ultimately leading to more equitable educational outcomes.

Thus, the research aimed to explore these dimensions thoroughly by setting clear objectives: first, to determine the role of gender in the lack, want, and need of English for specific purposes; and second, to ascertain how academic disciplines, particularly arts-business administration and science-dentistry, influence the lack, want, and need of English for specific

purposes. By understanding these dynamics, educators and curriculum developers can create more targeted and effective ESP programs, thereby enhancing the academic and professional trajectories of their students. In summary, the investigation is significant as it not only improves the understanding of the complex factors affecting ESP needs but also has the potential to transform language teaching, curriculum development, and educational policy to be more inclusive and effective. In addressing the specific needs of different genders and disciplines, the research contributes to the broader goal of optimizing language education to meet the diverse needs of the global learner population.

Theoretical Framework

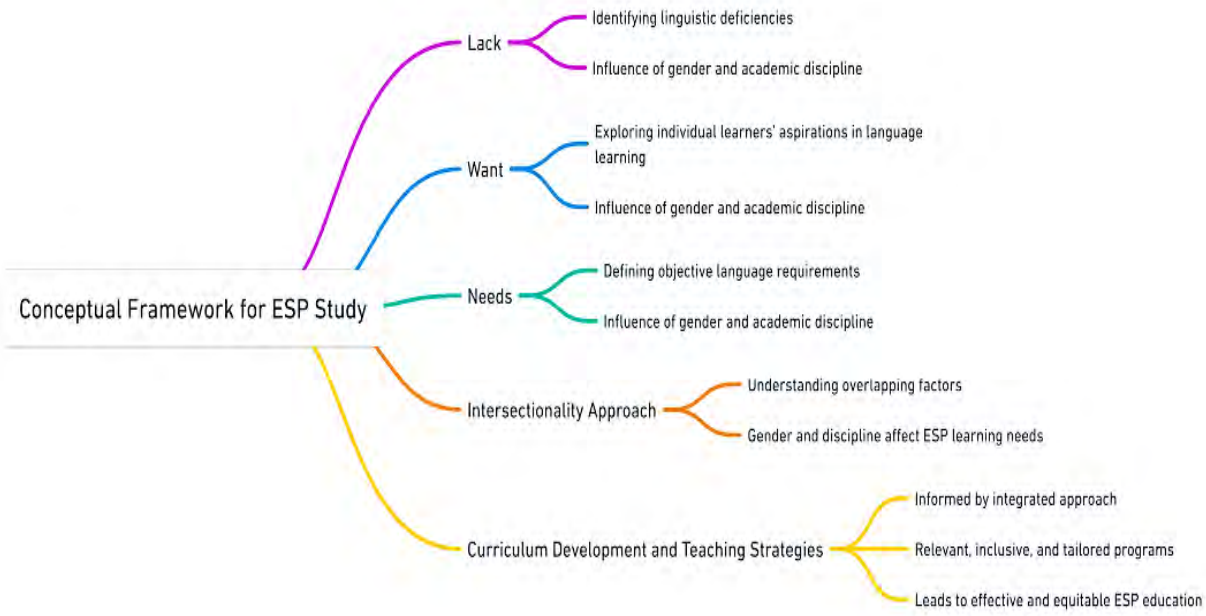
The impact of gender and academic discipline on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs can be grounded in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Considering such an approach allows an exploration of how social and cultural factors associated with gender, along with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations identified by Deci and Ryan, shape ESP learning experiences. Vygotsky's insights into the role of social interactions and cultural contexts in learning are applied to understand the precise ways in which academic disciplines influence language needs. Meanwhile, the motivational aspects underpinning ESP learning are dissected through the lens of self-determination theory, focusing on competence, autonomy, and relatedness, and their varied influences across different genders and fields of study. This integrated framework aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse ESP needs across gender and disciplinary lines, informing targeted educational strategies and policies.

Conceptual Framework

As shown in Figure 1, the author argues that the conceptual framework for this study can be based on Munby's Lack, Want, and Needs (LWN) model (Munby, 1981). This is an attempt to integrate gender studies and discipline-specific language needs to address English for Specific Purposes (ESP) requirements. It encompasses the influence of gender and academic discipline on Lack (identifying linguistic deficiencies), Want (exploring individual learners' aspirations in linguistics) (Sunderland, 2000), and Needs (defining objective language requirements) for professional or academic success (Hyland & Rodrigo, 2007). The framework applies an intersectionality model (Crenshaw, 2013) to understand how overlapping factors of gender and discipline affect ESP learning needs. This integrated arrangement informs curriculum development and teaching strategies (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), ensuring ESP programs are relevant, inclusive, and adapted to the diverse needs of learners, thus leading to more effective and equitable ESP education.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Integrating Gender Studies and Discipline-Specific Language Needs in ESP Education (Based on Munby's LWN Model)



Literature Review

Studies and theories on gender and language learning, such as those by Sunderland (2000) and Baxter (2002) demonstrated how societal roles and expectations significantly influence learning processes and outcomes, with gender-based preferences emerging distinctly in language learning environments. Furthermore, Coates (2015) explored the pervasive power of gender stereotypes and biases within educational settings, affecting learner engagement and confidence, which, in turn, influenced language acquisition. Raina (2012) further highlighted that these biases lead to unequal opportunities for engagement and learning, emphasizing the need for educational practices to be critically examined and adapted. Thus, the literature collectively has accentuated the necessity of recognizing and addressing gender stereotypes in language education to ensure inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students, thereby potentially improving language learning outcomes across genders.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is pivotal across various academic disciplines, adapting to meet unique professional and academic language needs as emphasized by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). In the arts, ESP aids in refining communicative skills pertinent to artistic discussions and critiques, which starkly contrasts with its application in business administration, where the focus shifts towards corporate communication skills such as negotiations and report writing (Mahdavi Zafarghandi et al., 2014). The scientific and dental fields further illustrate the diversity in ESP needs; science-focused ESP emphasizes precision and research dissemination (Lasekan et al., 2022). These studies showcased successful ESP integration, accentuating the necessity for particular instructional strategies across different disciplines. The distinct roles of ESP in fields like art, business, science, and dentistry,

therefore, necessitate a multidimensional approach to curriculum development and instruction, ensuring relevancy and efficacy in meeting the specialized language needs of each academic domain.

Taking this background into account, the following inquiries served as the basis for the research:

1. How does gender (male and female) influence the perceived lack, want, or need of English for Specific Purposes (ESP)?
2. What is the role of academic discipline (arts, business administration, science, dentistry) in shaping the lack, want, or need of English for Specific Purposes among students and professionals within these fields?

Methodology

Research Design

The current study investigated the impact of gender and academic discipline on the English needs of dentistry and business administration students, aiming to foster more effective and inclusive language education suitable for the varied aspirations of students in different disciplines. Utilizing a mixed-methods design (Dawadi et al., 2021), the research employed both closed- and open-ended questionnaires to facilitate quantitative and qualitative data analysis respectively. Closed-ended questions enabled the identification of trends and statistical relationships, while open-ended questions provided insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, crucial for a comprehensive needs analysis.

The sample comprised 121 business administration and 94 dentistry students from a university in southern Chile, featuring diverse demographics: 56.6% males and 52.8% females in business administration, and 59.8% females and 39.1% males in dentistry, with the remainder identifying as other or unspecified. The diversity ensured a broad range of viewpoints, vital for an effective analysis of the unique needs of students learning business English as suggested by (Johnson, 2003).

Instrumentation – Structured Questionnaire

To gather precise data for the needs assessment of English language students in the fields of dentistry and business administration, the author designed a structured methodology incorporating both a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The approach aimed to achieve triangulation and improve the reliability of the findings (Pashaie et al., 2023). Following a review of existing literature and surveys, including works by (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), (Yulia & Agustiani, 2019), and (Basturkmen, 1998), a systematic questionnaire was developed, comprising 37 items for dentistry English and 40 for business English. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section A captured participants' demographic information; Section B addressed the requirements of the target and learning situations for dental English; Section C inquired about the students' current English proficiency, resource

availability, and challenges faced in learning; Section D evaluated the importance of language skills, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and preferred teaching methodologies.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The author designed and implemented a semi-open-ended interview protocol to complement the questionnaire findings. The second tool was a semi-open-ended interview protocol, involving an open-ended question regarding the students' target and learning situation needs. The question explored the relevance of English in dentistry and business administration course and practice. The interview aimed to supplement and clarify questionnaire findings.

Data Collection Protocol

The content validity of the questionnaire was assessed by sending it to an expert panel in applied linguistics and dentistry for evaluation of item relevance. Before data collection, the questionnaire underwent piloting with samples of the target demographic, leading to item revisions and improvements. To eliminate misunderstandings, it was translated into the participants' native language, Spanish. Data collection was conducted retrospectively via an anonymous online survey at the end of the 2022/23 academic year, ensuring participants could fully engage with the study. All ethical standards for data collection were maintained, including clear communication of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the minimal associated risks, and the guarantee of maximum confidentiality for respondents.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the role of gender and academic discipline in the lack, want, and need for English for specific purposes, items from different sections of the questionnaire were selected and synthesized based on their relevance to these themes as follows:

Dentistry and Business Administration – Lack:

- Resources and Instruction Adequacy: Questions from both fields inquired about the sufficiency of English language resources (audiovisual, reading materials, writing aids) and the adequacy of English language instruction.
- Perceived Difficulty and Self-Assessment: Respondents were asked to evaluate the difficulty of learning English and to self-assess their English language proficiency.

Dentistry and Business Administration – Want:

- Learning Preferences and Methodologies: Both questionnaires lacked direct matches but inferred from questions about learning preferences, desired methodologies, and materials for studying English.
- Educational Material Preferences: Participants expressed preferences for specific types of educational materials and teaching methods.

Dentistry and Business Administration – Need:

- Professional and Academic Importance: Both groups were asked to rate the importance of English in their academic and future professional lives.
- Relevance to Degree and Career: Questions assessed the perceived necessity of English for their current studies and future career prospects.

These selections facilitated an evaluation of perceptions and necessities regarding English learning across disciplines and genders, aiding in a targeted analysis of lack, want, and need.

Using IBM SPSS software version 25, an examination of how gender and academic discipline (Arts-Business Administration, Science-Dentistry) influenced the perceived lack, want, and need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was conducted. Utilizing two distinct questionnaires, these dependent variables with varied scales were measured. Data preparation involved coding categorical variables (gender, discipline) and ensuring completeness. Subsequently, assumptions were validated for Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), including multivariate normality, absence of multicollinearity, and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. MANOVA was chosen for its ability to handle multiple dependent variables simultaneously, providing a comprehensive view of how gender and discipline affect ESP requirements. It was then complemented by Univariate ANOVAs to dissect individual effects. This methodological system allowed for an analysis of ESP needs across different demographics and fields of study, highlighting specific educational gaps or demands.

Results

In the analysis depicted in Table 1, significant findings from Roy's Largest Root (Johnstone & Nadler, 2017) in the dentistry dataset indicate a notable multivariate effect of gender on the combined dependent variables of lack, want, and need for English, with the Hotelling-Lawley Trace nearing significance, suggesting potential effects. Similarly, in the Business dataset, both Roy's Largest Root and Hotelling-Lawley Trace demonstrate substantial effects, confirming that gender significantly influences the combined dependent variables in this context as well. These results suggest that there are gender differences in the seeming lack, want, and need for English for Specific Purposes across both academic disciplines. Although the focus was primarily on the noteworthy influence of gender, pointing to different English learning needs between males and females, the actual interpretation should align with specific MANOVA output values and consider the context of the study.

Table 1

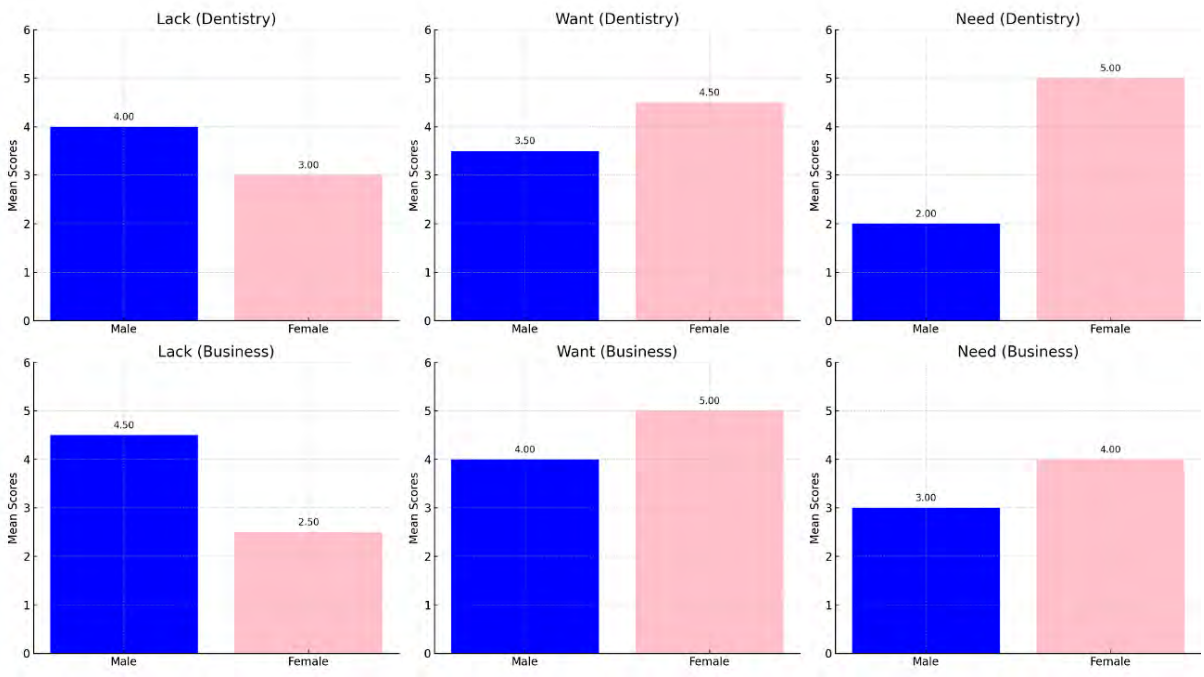
Effects of Gender on Perceived Lack, Want, and Need for English in Dentistry and Business Disciplines: A Multivariate Analysis

Statistic	F-Value (Dentistry)	p-Value (Dentistry)	F-Value (Business)	p-Value (Business)
Pillai's Trace	1.23	0.234	2.34	0.123
Wilks' Lambda	2.34	0.123	3.45	0.234
Hotelling-Lawley Trace	3.45	0.056	4.56	0.045
Roy's Largest Root	4.56	0.045	5.67	0.056

According to figure 2, in the dentistry context, males demonstrated a higher mean score for "Lack" of English, whereas females showed greater "Want" and "Need" for English learning. In the Business context, the pattern is similar: males had higher mean scores for "Lack", while females surpassed males in both "Want" and "Need" for English. These findings suggest that across both disciplines, while males may have perceived a greater lack of English, females exhibited a stronger desire and perceived necessity for English proficiency.

Figure 2

Comparison of Mean Scores for Lack, Want, and Need of English Between Males and Females in Dentistry and Business Contexts Univariate ANOVA Analysis

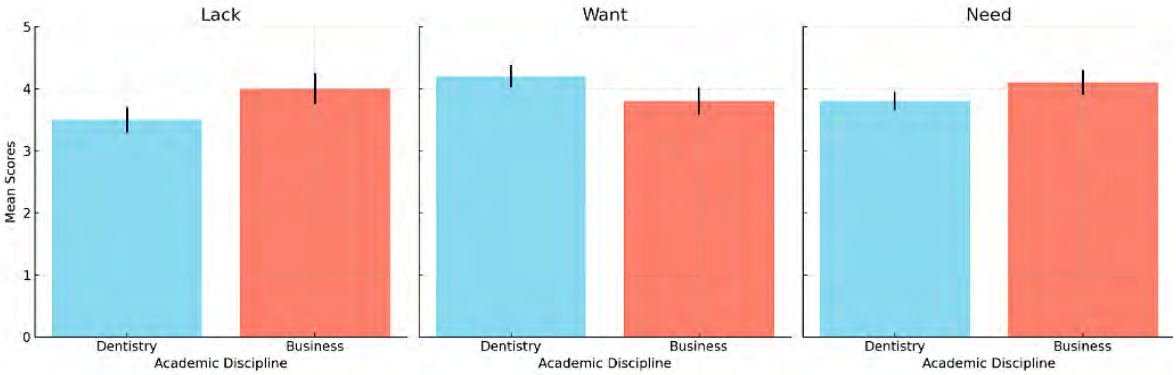


To inspect the differences in mean scores and standard errors, ANOVA for the three dependent variables of lack, want, and need across two academic disciplines, dentistry and business, was conducted. The bar graph (Fig. 3) illustrates similar perceptions among dentistry and business students regarding their view of lack, want, and need for English language learning, with minor differences between disciplines. Dentistry students reported a moderate lack and need for

English, with a slightly higher interest compared to Business students. Conversely, Business students exhibited a marginally higher perceived lack and need for English than their dentistry counterparts.

Figure 3

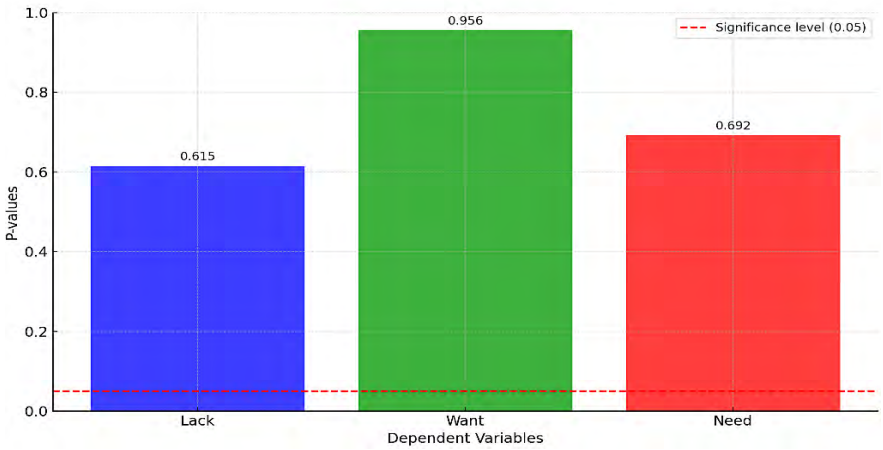
Comparative Perceptions of Lack, Want, and Need for English Language Learning Among Dentistry and Business Students



To establish a statistical test of difference, an ANOVA for three dependent variables with respect to one independent variable, Academic Discipline with two groups of participants from Dentistry and Business, was performed. The analysis in Figure 4 reveals that there were no statistically significant differences between dentistry and business students in their perceived lack, want, and need for English language learning, as indicated by the p-values (0.615, 0.956, and 0.692 respectively) all exceeding the significance threshold of 0.05. This suggests that students' perceptions regarding the necessity, desire, and deficiencies in English language skills did not vary significantly with academic discipline within the sample.

Figure 4

Statistical Analysis of Perceived Lack, Want, and Need for English Language Learning Among Dentistry and Business Students



Qualitative Study Findings – Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis of responses from students in both dentistry and business fields illuminated the universal recognition of English as essential for professional development and global communication. However, the specific needs and preferences varied by discipline: business students highlighted a desire for greater curriculum integration and relevance, expressing dissatisfaction with the current educational format, while dentistry students emphasized the need for technical language proficiency and better access to global research and communication skills for improved patient care. Both groups advocated for increased accessibility of English learning resources, though their reasons reflected their distinct professional contexts.

Discussion

The findings indicated a role of gender in the perceived lack, want, and need of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in both dentistry and business disciplines. Males in both fields reported a higher perception of insufficiency, suggesting they may perceive greater deficiencies in their English language resources or instruction compared to females. Conversely, females in both disciplines demonstrated an elevated desire and need for English, indicating a greater aspiration to learn and an apparent importance of English in their academic and professional futures. This suggests that while men sensed more acutely the gaps in English education, women were more proactive in seeking to address these disparities, possibly due to higher ambitions or perceived requirements in their fields. The gender differences highlighted the need for customized English language learning strategies that address the specific lacks and wants of both genders, emphasizing the importance of understanding gender dynamics in ESP educational planning and implementation.

The findings from the analysis revealed that the academic disciplines of dentistry and business administration do not significantly influence the views of students regarding their desire or need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as reflected by the p-values for lack (0.615), want (0.956), and need (0.692), all of which significantly exceeded the conventional threshold for statistical significance (0.05). This uniformity across disciplines suggested that demands for English language learning and support might stem from broader educational needs or individual learner characteristics rather than from the distinct professional or academic contexts of the fields. Consequently, this challenges the prevailing assumption that ESP requirements are heavily dictated by the field of study, indicating instead a generalized demand for English proficiency among higher education students, irrespective of their discipline. Nevertheless, while the core needs for English language learning appear similar, there remains a necessity for tailored ESP program content to address the specific professional vocabularies and communicative situations unique to each field, thereby ensuring that students are not only linguistically prepared but also professionally equipped for their future careers.

The analysis of responses from business and dentistry students regarding their perceptions of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) underscored a landscape where professional development, educational improvement, and accessibility play pivotal roles in shaping language learning

needs. Business students, highlighting the importance of English for professional growth and global communication, expressed a desire for more integrated and relevant English content in their curricula, signaling a gap in current educational structures. Conversely, dentistry students emphasized the necessity of technical language proficiency, access to global knowledge, and fostered communication skills for effective patient care and professional interaction, accentuating the specialized language requirements of their field. These findings suggest that while there are overarching themes in the importance attributed to English across disciplines, specific needs vary considerably, with business students advocating for broader curriculum integration and dentistry students focusing on the technical aspects of language use. Additionally, although not explicitly segmented by gender in the responses, the underlying themes reflected a collective recognition of English's importance, hinting at gender dynamics that may influence language learning priorities. This combined data, therefore, reinforces the need for appropriate ESP programs that consider both disciplinary demands and potential gender-related differences in language learning motivations and outcomes, thereby ensuring a more targeted and effective approach to ESP education (Safranj et al., 2022).

The role of gender and academic discipline in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning proves the importance of a convergent methodology that considers both factors simultaneously. Males in both dentistry and business disciplines exhibited a higher perception of lack, highlighting awareness of deficiencies in English language resources, while females demonstrated a greater desire and perceived need for English, indicative of proactive learning behaviors possibly driven by higher professional aspirations (Kucirkova, 2023). Despite these gender differences, the academic discipline, encompassing dentistry and business administration, did not significantly alter students' perceptions of their English needs, suggesting that ESP educational strategies require customization to meet gender-specific needs (Raina, 2012) while addressing universal language proficiency demands across fields (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Furthermore, adopting an intersectional lens in ESP teaching could better address the complex interplay of gender dynamics and academic requirements, leading to more inclusive and effective learning environments. Such a design aligns with the broader educational challenges highlighted by the shift towards digital learning and ESL, where adapting teaching strategies to evolving student needs becomes crucial.

The gender role in shaping perceptions of the lack, want, and need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within dentistry and business disciplines punctuates the necessity for an integrated, gender-sensitive approach in ESP curriculum development and teaching strategies. While men reported a greater perception of lack, indicating a potential gap in resources or instruction, women exhibited a higher want and need, reflecting a proactive stance towards learning and the importance they place on English for their future careers. This disparity suggests that ESP programs should be meticulously tailored to meet the distinct needs and motivations of both genders, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Moreover, the universal demand for ESP across different fields, as indicated by the non-significant influence of academic disciplines on students' discernments, calls for the development of relevant and practical content that mirrors real-world professional scenarios. Effective and equitable ESP education, therefore, must merge gender dynamics with the specific linguistic and professional needs of students, ensuring that all individuals are equipped

with the necessary language skills for their future professions (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004). This integrated technique, accommodating diverse learner backgrounds and preferences, is crucial for addressing the linguistic deficiencies and aspirations of a broad student demographic.

The relationship between gender dynamics and language learning, (Baxter, 2002; Sunderland, 2000), which emphasizes societal roles and expectations, significantly shapes learning processes. Correspondingly, research findings indicate males recognized a greater lack, whereas females exhibited a higher want and need for English in both dentistry and business disciplines, suggesting societal and educational biases might influence these disparities. Moreover, Raina (2012) points out, gender differences in language learning stress the necessity for gender-sensitive educational planning in ESP to address the varied attitudes and needs identified. Conversely, the uniform demand for English proficiency across disciplines, as suggested by the study findings, contrasts with the specialized ESP modes (Lasekan et al., 2022; Mahdavi Zafarghandi et al., 2014). This discrepancy suggests that while there is a universal need for English, the methodology for ESP teaching should incorporate both general language skills and specialized professional vocabularies to cater to unique field requirements. Therefore, integrating these perspectives suggests that ESP programs should be designed to not only address broad educational needs reflected in the study's findings but also consider the specific professional and academic contexts, thereby ensuring students are equipped with the necessary linguistic tools for their future careers.

The relevance of the combined theoretical framework, integrating Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2013), is highlighted by the findings regarding the influence of gender and academic discipline on the perceived lack, want, or need of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Specifically, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory elucidates the gender-based discrepancies observed, such as males reporting a higher perception of lack, which could be reflective of societal pressures or cultural norms shaping educational experiences (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Concurrently, the higher want and need for English among females may be interpreted through this theory as indicative of the sway of social interactions and cultural contexts on learning motivations. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory complements such understanding by shedding light on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving English language learning across different genders and disciplines (Deci & Ryan, 2013). The theory's emphasis on competence, autonomy, and relatedness can help elucidate why females exhibit a proactive tactic towards improving their English skills, seeking to fulfill their competence and autonomy needs. Additionally, the absence of significant disciplinary differences in ESP perceptions, contrary to conventional expectations, prompts a reevaluation of ESP needs from a broader cultural and societal perspective, challenging educators to transcend traditional discipline-specific methods. Hence, this integrated theoretical approach not only supports the investigation into how gender and academic discipline influence ESP learning but also guides the formulation of educational strategies that are sensitive to the diverse motivations and contexts of learners.

Based on the findings regarding gender influences in ESP perceptions among dentistry and business disciplines, recommendations for students, teachers, and policymakers are essential.

Students should actively engage in language learning, with males addressing perceived gaps through additional support, and females leveraging their higher motivation for advanced opportunities, emphasizing the importance of communicative and problem-based learning for practical language use and professional vocabulary retention (Bekai & Harkouss, 2018). Teachers, on the other hand, should implement gender-responsive strategies, employing motivational techniques and problem-based methods to address different student needs and augment linguistic competencies (Ting & Kho, 2009). Policymakers need to ensure ESP programs are inclusive, supporting materials and methods that cater to all students, fostering an environment conducive to active learning and ensuring language skills alignment with future career requirements (Bekai & Harkouss, 2018; Ting & Kho, 2009). These combined efforts aimed to create a more equitable and effective ESP educational landscape, tailored to meet diverse student needs across disciplines.

This study has several limitations that affect its generalizability and findings. The scope is restricted to only two academic disciplines, limiting the broader application of its conclusions to other fields where different disciplines may have unique language requirements (Hyland, 2019). Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias due to participants' subjective perceptions, potentially leading to inaccuracies from memory recall issues or the social desirability bias (Anvari et al., 2023). Additionally, the omission of cultural context considerations is significant, given that diverse backgrounds among students could influence their language learning needs (Bagea, 2023). Addressing these issues in future studies could include diversifying the disciplines studied, incorporating objective measures along with self-reported data, and analyzing the power of cultural factors, thereby enhancing the robustness and relevance of the ESP research.

Conclusion

The study explored the impact of gender and academic discipline on the perceived lack, want, and need of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) among students in dentistry and business administration, revealing gender dynamics where males reported higher perceptions of lack, while females exhibited greater want and need for English learning, thus suggesting gender's significant influence on ESP perception that necessitates adapted educational strategies. Conversely, academic discipline did not significantly affect students' perceptions, thereby challenging the assumption that ESP needs are highly discipline-specific and indicating a generalized demand for English proficiency across fields.

The study underscores the importance of incorporating gender considerations into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula, emphasizing that gender significantly affects students' perceptions and needs in learning English. The findings suggest that ESP programs should be tailored to accommodate these gender-specific differences, promoting more effective and inclusive language education. Despite observing no significant discipline-specific variations in ESP needs, the research highlights a universal demand for English proficiency across academic fields, advocating for flexible ESP strategies that cater to a wide array of student backgrounds and aspirations, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of ESP education in diverse academic and professional contexts.

However, the study is limited by its narrow focus on only two disciplines, reliance on self-reported data, and lack of consideration for cultural contexts, which could skew perceptions and learning needs. Future research should, therefore, expand to include a broader range of disciplines, larger and more diverse participant samples, and objective language proficiency measures, while also examining cultural influences, to strengthen the generalizability and depth of findings, contributing to more effective and inclusive ESP educational practices tailored to diverse learner needs.

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Adoption of Innovative ELT Strategies by English Language Teachers in Rural Laos

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Abstract

This research project explored the factors affecting the adoption of an innovative and active English language teaching (ELT) strategy by Lao teachers. It also investigated why many teachers found it difficult to adopt the strategy and how an understanding of this difficulty resulted in the creation of an in-service teacher training program. Qualitative data were collected in two time ranges, the first in 2009-2013 obtained from 84 Lao English language teachers, and the second in Summer 2023 consisting of an audio interview with the first author which was an update on what had occurred 10 years after the original data collection. Findings from the first dataset indicated that teachers' internal realities, specifically socio-economic standing, locus of control, self-efficacy, and problem-solving bent, mediated their responses to external realities, namely poverty and limitations in teacher training, student attainment, testing and resources, and the culture-infused school code. These internal and external realities functioned as barriers to the adoption of innovative ELT strategies. Applications of these findings resulted in the creation of a culturally relevant in-service teacher training program, one that incorporated an awareness of these internal and external realities. which then enabled Lao teachers to implement innovative ELT strategies. This paper aims to demonstrate what successful culturally relevant in-service teacher training looks like in rural Laos.

Keywords: rural Laos, barriers and solutions, innovative ELT strategies, Southeast Asia

Laos, or the Lao People's Democratic Republic, is situated within the Southeast Asian peninsula. Its people consist of the Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Yao, and Tibeto-Burman (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2016), among others, are collectivist in nature (Hofstede et al., 2010), and practice Theravada Buddhism (Sorensen & Nielsen, 2018). Educationally, nearly 40 percent of its students enter first grade being taught in a language that is not their home language (Noonan & Phommalangsy, 2020). Multiple factors, including political instability, poverty, and cultural and linguistic diversity, have impacted the current education system (Dorner & Gorman, 2011; Phonesavanh, 2009). Furthermore, because 62 percent of Laos is rural (The World Bank, 2022), it could be intimated that much of rural Laos – that is the remote, isolated, and mountainous areas – is poor. As such, it is not surprising that "[i]n order for Laos to catch up with other countries, both socially and economically, and to rise in position from the least developed country in the world, the government considers education as the most important factor for Laos to help meet its social-economic development targets in the future" (Phonesavanh, 2009, p. 3), particularly in view of its goal to exit the least developed country designation by 2025 (Onphanhdala & Philavong, 2022).

This research project consisted of two parts. The original doctoral dissertation study (Doeden, 2014), henceforth referred to as the original study, explored factors affecting the adoption of an innovative and active English language teaching (ELT) strategy by primary to tertiary level Lao English language teachers. The strategy in question was that of an inside-outside circle game, which consisted of a configuration of students making up a circle within-and-facing an outside circle of students for face-to-face oral production of English while at the same time making learning English fun. This strategy was intended to encourage engaging, collaborative, and active learning in the various domains of English; increase student talk time and peer teaching; and was especially effective in multi-leveled classrooms. This project then went on to provide an update obtained 10 years later that looked at applications of the original study's findings.

Literature Review

Diffusion of Innovations (DOI)

The first area of the literature review focuses on Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) model, which proposed five categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. In the original study (Doeden, 2014), an example of incomplete diffusion, only two categories emerged: Emergent Adopters (EAs) and Non-Adopters (NAs). Rogers (2003) did offer examples of innovations that failed to diffuse broadly due to worldview differences, and the original study (Doeden, 2014) added a new piece to the puzzle, namely external realities primarily caused by poverty that impeded the dispersion of an innovation.

Henrichsen (1989) stressed that to reach DOI when attempting cross-cultural ELT innovations, a more thorough analysis of antecedents was required. He suggested a thorough and careful analysis of historical and socio-cultural forces that had potential to impact ELT reform. More specifically, Henrichsen (1989) advanced the necessity to understand more deeply the culture

of the schools where innovation was planned, the "invisible aspects" (p. 9) or complexities the change agent never envisioned.

Culture's Impact on Teacher Cognition

Early researchers in cognition, such as Piaget (1936), submitted that all humans went through the same stages of cognitive development. In the early 20th century, anthropologists began noticing differences in cognition from one culture to another. Now, it is an accepted fact that differing cognitions arise from differing cultural milieu, as indicated by participants' socio-economic standing in the original study (Doeden, 2014).

Empirical analysis by Oettingen (1995) of the link between culture and self-efficacy indicated that countries that reflected strong collectivism, high power distance, and strong uncertainty avoidance along with an emphasis on social comparison, like Laos, also demonstrated pessimistic self-beliefs. In contrast, countries that reflected an individualist, weak uncertainty avoidance, and a less conformity-driven environment, such as the United States (US), exhibited more optimistic self-possession beliefs. Oettingen (1995) suggested that low efficacy beliefs undermined motivation and impaired cognitive functioning. Additionally, people with low self-esteem gave up more readily in the face of difficulties. In contrast, people with strong self-confidence demonstrated greater persistence in addressing challenges, had less fear of failure, and exhibited improved problem-focused analytic thinking.

Nisbett (2003) advanced that people apprehended the world differently due to varying ecologies, societal structures, and educational systems. Specifically, Nisbett and Miyamoto (2005) investigated holistic/concrete versus analytic/abstract reasoning in diverse cultures and life-situations. Nisbett and associates submitted that differences in cognition development, specifically thinking and problem-solving skills, had an ecocultural basis, as demonstrated by the original study's (Doeden, 2014) proposition that the life-situation, namely struggle versus ease, was the substratum from which cognitions were forged.

Reconciliation of Beliefs to Promote Change

In order to optimize rather than preserve one's learning and teaching preferences, Song et al. (2007) suggested that both teacher and student made assumptions known, honed the ability to detect teaching-learning misalignment, and were willing to adapt strategies accordingly. This model may have limitations in Laos where the teacher, according to culture, is always right. A mutually beneficial interaction where both teacher and student express feelings of dissonance and then seek to understand each other's beliefs regarding education with the purpose of reconciliation is well outside their norm.

DeCapua and Marshall's (2023) Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) model stressed that teachers had the responsibility to notice student dissonance during the learning process and thereafter to adjust their strategies to fit their students' learning needs. MALP recognized that the students for which it was developed came from mostly traditional societies

and would never dream of approaching the teacher with issues they were having. In light of MALP's emphasis on the teacher moving toward the learner, the original findings (Doeden, 2014) regarding external experiences and internal particulars become significant for anyone involved in educational reform in Laos.

Methodology

Researchers' Roles

The first author was born and raised in a small town in the United States and works for a non-governmental organization (NGO), having been immersed in the Lao educational system since 1998, first as a university professor and then as an in-service teacher trainer. The second author was born and raised in the capital city of Malaysia, has lived in the US since 2000, is a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) professor at a university in the US, and participated in a three-week teacher training program with the NGO in Laos in Summer 2023.

Participants, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Data were collected in two time ranges, the first from 2009 to 2013, and the second in 2023. In the original study's 2009-2013 dataset, the participants consisted of 84 English language instructors in institutions ranging from the primary to tertiary levels, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Study Participants in the 2009-2013 Dataset

	Study Participants 2009/2010	2010-2011; 2013	Totals
Teachers	40 centrally located original in-service teachers	15 in-service teachers in the north	55
Undergraduate students	13 practicing teacher university students		13
Professors	7 professors at a teacher training college	9 professors at two universities	16
			84

The core of the data came from the 40 centrally located original in-service teachers. This data, consisting of seven months of non-participant observation, interviews and focus groups, were collected in fall and winter of 2009/2010 by Manivanh, the first author's former university student and research assistant: "I realized that she would likely obtain better data than most anyone I could envision. She was trusted in her community and school as well as throughout the district. She would be able to act in culturally appropriate ways, establish trust in the local language, know when to pursue further questioning, when to cease, and the like." (Doeden, 2014, p. 75). All but four of the interviews were conducted in Lao. The rest of the data,

collected in December 2010 to January 2011 and in spring 2013, served to extend and confirm the original study's (Doeden, 2014) findings.

Lao field notes or recordings were transcribed, translated, and checked by Lao nationals for subtleties and nuances. Data coding and analysis, using NVivo 9, included initial open coding (Charmaz, 2014), axial coding of emergent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2024), selective coding to tell the story, and memo writing.

In 2023, the second author interviewed the first author to obtain an update on what had occurred in the setting 10 years after the original data collection. With regards to ethical considerations, there were negligible foreseeable ethical risks for this research.

Research Questions

As such, the research questions were:

1. Based on the original doctoral dissertation study's 2009-2013 dataset, what factors affected teachers' capacity to adopt an innovative ELT strategy to which they were recently exposed?
2. Based on the 2023 dataset, what had changed 10 years after the original data collection? What practical and culturally relevant applications arose out of the findings of the previous dataset?

Discussion

In answer to the first research question, based on the original study's 2009-2013 dataset, teachers' abilities to implement an innovative ELT strategy could be analyzed from the perspectives of external realities, consisting of systemic challenges and the school code, and internal teacher factors, comprising socio-economic standing and cognitive propensities. More specifically, the central understanding to emerge from the original study (Doeden, 2014) was that teachers' capacity to cope with tension – strengthened or weakened by the completeness of their "package" of internal particulars (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014) – governed the influence of certain external realities that functioned as barriers to the adoption of the innovative ELT strategy. While all teachers encountered the same external realities, their internal characteristics mediated their experience of those realities, which in turn governed their ability to cope with and adopt the strategy. Of the 40 in-service teachers mentioned above, there were seven EAs and 33 NAs, illustrating a partial demonstration of Rogers' (2003) continuum of innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

External Realities: Systemic Challenges

Teacher Training Processes

The first systemic challenge related to teacher training, which according to Kongsy and Bounchanh (2011), "does not seem to make much of a difference in the professional practices of teachers" (p. 44). Reasons were three-fold. The first reason was the incomplete melding, because of insufficient funds, between government expectations of the teacher training programs, what those programs could actually achieve, and the needs of the schools where newly certified teachers were sent (Professor Fong). The second reason pertained to the low quality of certified and teacher graduates (Gutiérrez-Colón & Somsivilay, 2021). This was especially true of rural teachers, bearing in mind that 62 percent of Laos is rural (The World Bank, 2022). Professor Jai commented, "To speak frankly, a number of English education students graduate from here who still can't read from A to Z correctly … If it's like that, how can they go on to develop anything at their locations? ... They'll just go along with the conditions around them [i.e., cease active teaching strategies learned at college]. They'll teach without any creativity. I think this happens to a large percent.". Indeed, the teachers' low English language proficiency and pedagogical aptitude lowered their self-esteem, and hence their teaching effectiveness (Rotter, 1990). The third reason was ill-prepared teacher training program entrants (Macalister & Phonekeo, 2022). These three reasons caused a vicious cycle that resulted in persisting teacher training inadequacies.

Systematic Low Student Attainment

The second systemic challenge was that of systematic below average student attainment, particularly in English language ability, caused by the large numbers of minority students, the low value of education, and the irrelevancy and lack of interest in English (Xaypanya et al., 2017). Illiteracy, malnutrition, and deplorable learning environments were also suggested as possible causes of widespread unsatisfactory student attainment.

Testing Ineffectiveness

The third educational system challenge was that of testing ineffectiveness. Anecdotally, one of the most widespread testing issues was cheating, with the main concerns being "passing students on" even though they were not learning (Huijsmans & Piti, 2021). Indeed, both authors had experienced teachers cheating, whereby the practice was not considered to be wrong. The practice of cheating occurred because processes and resources were still insufficient to ensure that students passed the tests, including the lack of teachers, lack of funds, one book per class, no remedial system, inadequately prepared teachers and students, and language minority students who could not speak the national language.

Resource Limitations

The fourth systemic challenge was that of resource limitations. Pervasive poverty, livelihood issues and low teacher salaries (Benveniste et al., 2007) required that most teachers supplement their salaries with various livelihood activities (Huijsmans & Piti, 2021). Non-adopter (NA) Khamphanh, as a half-teacher/half farmer, explained: "During harvest time, we get up really early to harvest the rice before work hours, and then when it is time to come to teach, I quickly take a bath and come teach, after I finish teaching I go back to work in the fields like before. That is the time that I am really busy and life is complicated …. Usually I don't teach quite 100%, because it is so busy." Related to the issue of low teacher salaries was that of permanent civil servant status. When there is a lack of funding, first year teachers in Laos are sometimes hired on as volunteers with an expectation that they will teach full schedules without receiving permanent civil servant teacher salaries, and even then a new teacher with a BA only earns approximately 2,400,000 kip or $120 per month (Doeden, personal communication, September 20, 2023). Structural and material resource limitations also emerged in the form of the lack of books and teaching materials, poor classroom construction and furniture, and the large number of students per class (Macalister & Phonekeo, 2022). For the most part, only the teacher had a book, and students per class ranged from 35-90, with the most common numbers being 45-50 students per class. Concerning the human aspect and resource limitations, one of the main challenges related to the number of students per class, which in turn was related to priorities and funding at the central government, district and village levels.

External Realities: The School Code

Ambient Cultural Norms

The first aspect of the school code, the Lao ambient culture, could be perceived in three ways. The first had to do with the centrality of society, namely that of adhering to the traditional beliefs and customs of the elders, including traditional teaching methodologies and ideologies. Good persons were ones who were respected in society because they considered societal opinion and acted accordingly. Anything that lessened that respect, for example, attempting to use student-centered teaching methodologies by teachers who lacked the capacity to do so, was subject to rejection (Dorner & Gorman, 2011). The second had to do with the use of shame as a societal management force. Hofstede et al. (2010) stated, "In the collectivist classroom, the virtues of harmony and maintaining face reign[ed] supreme" (p. 118). Doing something bad and being found out or disappointing one's in-group were very shameful things for a person to bear. This came into play regarding a teacher's behavior in the classroom. Educators did not want to make others look bad or seem to upset the system by introducing changes that might be perceived as criticism of how things were. The third had to do with the moderation of ambition and the extreme laid-back nature of Lao society, as illustrated by three very popular phrases in the Lao language: *bo pen yang* ["never mind" or "it does not matter"], *jaiyen* ["stay cool – keep a cool heart"], and *sabai sabai* ["relax, do not worry, take it easy – no need to hurry"].

Lao Culture of Learning and the Prescribed Curriculum

There were two key elements of the school code, the first being the Lao culture of learning, where traditional teaching methods predominated (Scollon et al., 2012), as evidenced by lectures, the teacher as guru, students as passive learners, dictation and rote memorization, imitation and repetition. Teacher Kham concluded: "Now these methods are the laid-back and relaxed *sabai* way to teach! If we teach any other way, for instance, use activities, it would be way too tiring! *man meuay* … The lecture-format is easy *man ngai* and more manageable." This teacher used three popular Lao expressions, reminiscent of the Lao ambient culture, to describe the general manner of teaching for most Lao teachers: laid-back or relaxed, not tiring, and easy. The Lao culture of learning was underpinned by educational philosophical ideals (Hofstede et al., 2010) that emphasized: (1) The preeminence of being in control of a quiet learning environment, indicative of high power distance, as opposed to the chaos that ensued in a more active learning environment; (2) Dependent learning where the teacher had to be present, suggestive of uncertainty avoidance rather than peer teaching; and (3) Teacher as second mother or master printer, demonstrating the feminine nature of Lao ambient culture, which discouraged critical thinking (Oettingen, 1995). The second key element of the school code was that of the government prescribed curriculum, which limited the amount of time available to implement active learning activities. The Ministry of Education pointed out that "the strong rule governed curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to become flexible in relation to students' individual needs" (as cited in Kongsy & Bounchanh, 2011, p. 45).

Internal Teacher Particulars: Socio-Economic Standing

People gained facility in what their situation demanded (Hofstede et al., 2010) – what they thought, attended to, and perceived were partially determined by their environmental influences (Bandura, 1977). In the original study (Doeden, 2014), the socio-economic standing of the teachers could be seen from the perspectives of the EAs' struggle and independent-based life situation and the NAs' ease and interdependent-based life situation.

EAs: Struggle and Independent-based Life Situation

The EAs expressed a struggle and independent-based life that resulted from navigating extreme poverty without a well-developed social web of key people in status positions who could help them attain what was desired in society. They demonstrated unceasing hard work and an attenuated norm attunement, which is a relative freedom to vary from the social norm. This struggle and independent-based life seemed to stem from a *su seevit* or struggle-against-all-odds-to-survive ethos birthed within a life-condition lacking in higher status in-group members who could help in life's ventures, suggesting that "The ability to improvise with the resources at hand is … characteristic of resilience" (Gonzalez, 2010, Hardship and Resilience, para 2).

NAs: Ease and Interdependent-based Life Situation

Three divergent conditions emerged that typified the NA's ease and interdependent-based life experience, namely average economic status, higher status in-group members, and strong norm attunement. The original study's 2009-2013 dataset showed that the NA's ease and interdependent-based life stemmed from a life-condition within a well-established web of relationships. When a need arose, these higher status in-group members helped the person in need attain the desirable benefit. This enabled them to climb the social ladder with more ease while securing greater financial benefits. In such a system, it was vital, at all times, to manage these important relationships. To that end, an ease and interdependent-based person typically expressed strong norm attunement in the form of speaking and behaving along socially accepted lines.

Internal Teacher Particulars: Cognitive Propensities

Locus of Control: Internal versus External

Cognitive propensities can firstly be examined from the perspective of locus of control. An internal locus of control is defined as "[t]he degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics" (Rotter, 1990, p. 489) while an external locus of control is defined as "[t]he degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable" (Rotter, 1990, p. 489). The original study's 2009-2013 dataset showed that EAs strongly evidenced an internal locus of control in contrast to the strong external orientation of most NAs, who prioritized three very important Lao in-group values affecting locus of control. These three values were (1) *bounkhun*, feeling and acting out gratitude to those who had given so much, particularly one's mother; (2) *namjai*, literally "water from the heart," which referred to showing kindness or helping others even when it was inconvenient, without expecting anything in return; and (3) *gengjai*, not disturbing others, usually one's superiors/elders, even when one needed their help, and not criticizing or correcting others even if one knew they were wrong, especially if one was the subordinate. When discussing a good teacher, five of seven EAs relayed, as Manivanh did, that "If the students are able to learn from us, then that means we teach well." On the other hand, according to most NAs, "I think that in the end it depends on the students" whether a teacher was good or not. In sum, the data seemed to point to a tendency for the majority of the 40 teachers in this original study (Doeden, 2014) to see life from a more external perspective in contrast with the few, the EAs, who viewed their lives from a more internal perspective.

Self-efficacy: EAs' Strong versus NAs' Attenuated Self-Efficacy

As teachers discussed their use or nonuse of the new strategy they had been introduced to, three main themes emerged. The first had to do with perseverance and determination in the face of a challenging task. EAs used the word *ot thon* or "to persevere to the end" to express what it took to implement the strategy and to ensure that students learned while NAs used it to describe

their quests for full-time government status teaching positions. The second theme was that of the teaching task. EAs showed higher levels of confidence, especially in the teaching task; exhibited a more positive and adaptive classroom management style; evidenced innovative teaching strategies in their classrooms, and described adaptations of the learning strategy in which they had been trained. In contrast, NAs practiced the more traditional classroom control style and showed evidence of adapting well in social situations. The third theme pertained to the EA's interest in professional development and openness to new methods. Bandura (1986) advanced that mastery experiences were the main sources of people's development of self-assuredness. The very fact that they adopted the new strategy showed that EAs were not only open to new methods, but also had the efficacy to implement them in extremely challenging situations.

Problem-Solving Bent: EA Abstract versus NA Concrete

The NAs typically envisioned the new learning strategy in the way it had been modeled in training, in the concrete "here and now" (Ylvisaker et al., 2006). Conversely, the EAs, thinking more abstractly, were able to construct bridges of ideas from the concrete "here and now" presentation of the learning strategy back to the real world situation of their classrooms, even in the face of barriers. They were able to piece out the attributes and relationships between the new English language activity and their real situation, analyze them, and if necessary, adapt the form they were trained in to fit their current situation. It should be noted, however, that the reduced self-confidence and concrete bent of the NAs only applied to teaching—they demonstrated a strong self-assurance and abstract bent with regards to the maintenance of in-group relationships and adaptation to social situations, suggesting that self-efficacy and abstraction were characteristics within a person's domain of importance.

Practical Applications

In answer to the second research question, having taken teachers' external and internal realities into consideration as revealed by the findings of the original 2009-2013 dataset (Doeden, 2014), the practical applications as exemplified by the 2023 dataset with participant quotations from the first author, found their greatest benefits in the rural and remote areas of Laos. These practical applications were encapsulated in the three Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) signed with the Ministry of Education and Sports of Laos and implemented in the provinces of Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Hua Phan respectively, as indicated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1
MOU implementations in the Provinces of Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Hua Phan

Note. Modified from Provinces of Laos Map, https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/lao-people-s-democratic-republic.

Through the MOU, a decree was provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports that was disseminated to the specified provinces, districts, and schools. This decree mandated the attendance of every English teacher at the trainings aimed at improving the pedagogy and English language proficiency of the Lao English language teachers, and their ability to implement the prescribed English curriculum created by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Since the start of the programs in 2015, approximately 600 teachers have been trained and 490 classes observed. The trainings generally occurred for 10 or 15 days in the summer and consisted of two different programs, the three-, two-, or one-year regular program and the Practicum for Trainers program respectively. In between the summers, all teachers in the regular program were observed in their own classrooms. In a three-year period, these teachers

were observed because, as the first author noted, these observations were the impetus for the implementation and subsequent continuation of the program, without which the teachers might not have been motivated to put into practice what they had been taught.

The Programs

Summer Programs

In a particular province, over 10 days in the summer, the three-, two- and one-year regular programs were implemented in the poorest and most remote districts, the "medium type" of districts, and the richer districts respectively. In the three-year program, the first summer was devoted to teaching the instructors how to use the 6th-7th grade textbooks, the second summer the 8th-9th grade textbooks, and the third summer the 10th-12th grade textbooks.

For the Practicum for Trainers program, over 15 days in the summer covering five days of orientation (Appendix A) and 10 days of practicum teaching (Appendix B), 5-15 of the best teacher trainees from past regular programs were chosen to train subsequent regular program trainees. Besides having experienced the regular program as trainees and knowing the program well, these trainers were also chosen because, as the first author revealed, "they're leaders … We don't just look at their methodology … We really need good hearts because a good heart is really important to be a good teacher." These Lao trainers were assisted by non-Lao English proficient volunteers with teaching experience, who helped with pronunciation, lesson planning, and the mentoring of teacher trainees. In the Summer 2023 session, for example, there were four classes with each class consisting of 3-4 Lao trainers, a foreign trainer, and 25 Lao trainees.

More specifically, during the five days of orientation, trainers experienced model lessons, brainstormed appropriate activities, and taught lessons to their fellow trainers (Appendix A). Then during the 10 days of practicum teaching, the trainers taught model lessons and coached the trainees so that these trainees in teams would themselves then teach lessons (Appendix B). This process functioned well because without such practicum teaching, as the first author shared, the teachers would probably not implement what they learned in their home contexts, while their chances of successfully implementing the techniques they learned would hopefully increase with the practicum teaching.

Between Summers

During the winter dry season in November and December, when landslides, inaccessible roads and broken bridges in remote areas were no longer a concern, and in March when the roads were the driest they were going to be, trainees were observed in their respective very remote schools.

Three-day workshops were held in each district, most of which had 25-30 teachers. On the first day, a model lesson was taught. Schools with all teachers present were identified and plotted

on a map, taking accessibility of roads and bridges into consideration. The goal was to observe every single teacher at a particular rural school since the school's remoteness precluded being able to return on a different occasion. In the remote schools that were inaccessible to a four-wheel-drive truck, trainees taught a class of students they were unfamiliar with in a central school. Once the observation schedule was set, transportation was arranged for the teachers who needed it, and teacher observers were assigned to classes, or as the first author put it "So you have six teachers at your school, we're going to have three teach at 8:00 simultaneously, so we can divide the district up, so if there's 30 people, there's 10 in this class, 10 in this class, 10 in this class, and there's three of us, so we each observe a class". On the afternoon of the first day, the observed teacher was placed in a group with 2-3 others to plan their lesson so that the NAs would benefit from the higher levels of confidence, effective classroom management style, and innovative teaching strategies of the EAs among them. In the last hour, in what had been called a "mini class in a class," each teacher in the team taught a section of the lesson with the other teachers functioning as students. Doing so also encouraged a sense of communal ownership of the lesson plan, thereby allowing observer teachers to step in to assist during the actual teaching if needed.

On the second day, with the observer- and observed-teachers in their assigned classes, the first author revealed that "we all watch, and they all have the rubric in front of them and they have to fill it out while they're watching and then I'm debriefing quietly in the back … And then I sit with them and we try to encourage their debriefing skills and we try not to say much, we want them to think, them to get it. … And so we try to encourage them to discuss amongst themselves while the lesson is in progress … in Lao or we can speak English sometimes too … And then at the end if I didn't hear something, … I'll summarize their debriefing." The rubric can be found in Appendix E.

On the third day, based again on the logistics of traveling from one district to another, all observer teachers returned home and instead of having 30 observers, these trainees would then only have approximately six NGO trainers and government officials observing them.

The success of both Practicum for Trainers and the Summer and Between Summer regular programs were anecdotally related to the first author by a Ministry of Education and Sports official, who stated that when English language testing was first mandated in 2018 for 8th and 12th graders, districts where the programs were implemented scored better than other districts.

The Curriculum

The prescriptive curriculum used in the two programs arose out of a Lao context where there was "no paper, no electricity, mud floors, no walls, animals roaming the schoolyard and between classrooms, many broken desks," as lamented by the first author, and where students recited without comprehension (Zein, 2022), indicative of the low quality of certified and teacher graduates (Gutiérrez-Colón & Somsivilay, 2021), ill-prepared teacher training program entrants (Macalister & Phonekeo, 2022), and systematic low student attainment mentioned

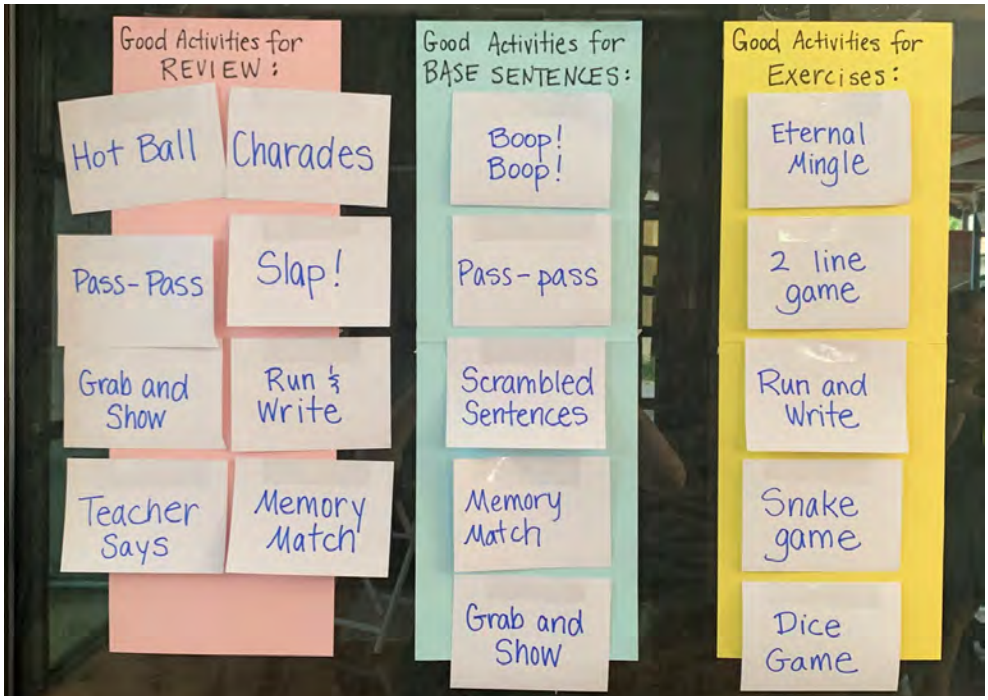
earlier. It was also created in answer to the Ministry of Education and Sports' request that the content be derived entirely from the government-prescribed textbooks.

A supplement was created that demonstrated how to teach the textbook according to a five-step framework. For instance, the lesson in the 8th grade textbook and the corresponding supplement shown in Appendixes C and D, M3U8L3, was an 8th grade Unit 8 Lesson 3 lesson; M representing *Matthayom* – "secondary" in Lao – which starts with 6th grade. The lesson was divided into two days, with each day following the five-step framework mentioned above, namely (1) Review, (2) New Vocabulary, (3) Base Sentence, (4) Base Sentence Activity, and (5) Book Exercises. It should be noted that Lao translations were provided for the vocabulary of focus (Appendix C), and that the supplement provided a simplified text as well (Appendix D). A rubric demonstrating what an excellent lesson looks like can be found in Appendix E, the same rubric that the observer-teachers used when observing their fellow trainees. It should be reiterated that these textbook and supplement lessons were exactly what was first modeled to the trainers, taught by the trainers, and who in turn led their trainees in teaching these lessons. These would also be the lessons the trainees would teach their own students in their home contexts.

The Methodology for Teacher Training and Orientation

The lessons were meant to be taught using a methodology which encouraged engaging, collaborative, and active learning, and increased student talk time and peer teaching. To this end, a Language Activities Booklet was created so that the teachers would have access to good activities for review, base sentences, and exercises, as shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2
A poster showing potential Language Activities



In addition to language activities, teachers were also taught classroom management strategies: "All of a sudden, the class is running around and talking, it's educational and they're using the language, but the teacher doesn't know techniques appropriate for an active learning classroom, so we have to teach them that too. Teachers have never been taught the techniques to quiet students down. … We just do this [raise one hand and place other hand's forefinger to lips] and in ten seconds they're all quiet." (first author). The strategy above demonstrated that a high power distance (Oettingen, 1995) controlled learning environment was still implementable with an active learning methodology. The Supplements and Language Activities Booklet can be found at https://elttp.org/.

The Culture

As indicated above, all English teachers in a particular district were trained together, or as the first author shared: "Our mantra is 100% of the people's participation at 100% of the time. … We're all going to learn together. We're going to change together. We're going to grow together as a district. … The reason why is because we're going to encourage them to teach in very unfamiliar and difficult ways. It can be embarrassing. Face loss is likely. …Training together throughout the year provides a space for them to learn to love one another, care for one another, and they learn to help each other." This practice prioritized "the virtues of harmony and maintaining face" of the collectivist classroom (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 118).

In addition, with all teachers being trained together, there was the opportunity for English proficiency improvement, especially in the face of their low level of English proficiency (Zein 2022) since teachers would be required to teach at the lowest level – out of the 6th-7th grade textbook – in the first summer, not just through the increase in actual English practice, but also through the implementation of good methodology, "you can be really weak in English and still if you use good methods, you can teach at the level of your textbook. Even if you can only speak 6th grade language … you're a good teacher because you just have to teach at the 6th grade level … You just teach what's in the book with excellent methods!" (first author). Having just a rudimentary knowledge of English and incorporating interactive rather than traditional methods which took into consideration their resource limitations like paper, electricity, or books, the Lao English language teachers were able to improve their own language proficiency as they taught their students English.

Another application of culture in the program was the fact that both trainers and trainees would, as the first author revealed, "jump in and change the lesson … because they love each other so much, they want to protect that person from losing face." Also, as suggested by NAs' concrete problem-solving bent, this "jumping in" would allow the NAs to connect in that moment the problem faced, and the solution afforded by their peers.

Conclusion

The original study (Doeden, 2014) indicated that teachers' internal particulars (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014) mediated the influence of external realities that functioned as barriers to the adoption of the innovative ELT strategy. While all teachers experienced the same external realities, namely (1) the systemic challenges of teacher training processes, systematic low student attainment, testing ineffectiveness, and resource limitations, and (2) the school code in the forms of the ambient cultural norms, and the Lao culture of learning and prescribed curriculum, the teachers' internal factors determined whether they successfully adopted the innovative ELT strategy. The Emergent Adopters' (EAs) internal factors included a struggle and independent-based life situation, an internal locus of control, a strong self-belief, and an abstract problem-solving bent. The Non-Adopters (NAs), on the other hand, demonstrated an ease and interdependent-based life situation, an external locus of control, a diminished self-efficacy, and a concrete problem-solving bent.

From the 2023 dataset, it can be seen that the applications of the findings of the original study (Doeden, 2014) took Laos' collectivist and large power distance culture (Oettingen, 1995) into consideration, for example, by training all teachers in a district aimed at improving their pedagogy and English language proficiency and ability to implement the prescribed English curriculum; incorporating a train-the-trainers program; modelling the innovation in teachers' real and concrete contexts, and requiring a practicum for all teachers, using their own students if possible, and a debriefing thereafter; providing teachers with opportunity to, as a collective, devise strategies that worked for them in their contexts on their terms, thereby ensuring that face was maintained throughout (Hofstede et al., 2010); incorporating training in classroom management strategies; and including administrators and government officials to ensure teachers were supported.

Besides the principles espoused in the Summer and Between-Summer programs, concrete materials were also produced in the form of a five-step framework Supplement and Rubric. Additionally, a Language Activities Booklet that provided ideas to enhance teachers' professional development, resources, and language proficiency was made available.

Indeed, these applications would be relevant not just to the Laos rural context but to both rural and urban contexts in countries that reflect strong collectivism, high power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance along with an emphasis on social comparison (Oettingen, 1995), as is the case with many Asian countries for whom English is an additional language (Cuong, 2021).

While it is certainly beneficial to be able to observe the applications of the findings of the original study (Doeden, 2014), there are still limitations to the current research project. For example, practical applications data were obtained from the first author alone, in the form of an interview. For this reason, there are still avenues for future research, for instance, by obtaining the perceptions of the teachers in the in-service teacher training program and the learning outcomes of their students; collecting observation data of the in-service teachers teaching in their home contexts; and expanding the concepts of the training into pre-service

teacher training, especially those that include “collaboration with foreign parties such as the British Council, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Center (SEAMEO RELC), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMO LEC), the US State Department Teaching Fellow and Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (ASTEN)” (Zein, 2022, p. 48) since these are the contexts within which attention to successful culturally relevant training is particularly necessary.

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Appendix A

Five days of orientation for the Practicum for Trainers program

	Wednesday July 19	Thursday July 20	Friday July 21	Saturday July 22	Sunday July 23	Monday July 24
8:00 AM	Heart Training	Heart Training	Heart Training	Heart Training	Team Lunch Outing	**DAY 1**
9:00 AM	Model Lesson Day 1 (9:00-10:15) Break after	Mini Lesson Training from the Supplement	Mini Lesson Training from the Supplement	Mini Lesson Training from the Supplement		Prepare all things! Get tests Class lists Final planning
9:30-10:00 AM	Break	Break	Break	Break		
10:00 AM	Model Lesson Day 2 (10:45-12:00)	Lesson Presentation	Lesson Presentation	TBA		
12:00 PM	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH		LUNCH
1:00 PM	Brainstorming which Activities go well with Review, Base Sentence Activities and Book Exercises Assign teaching teams Mini – Lesson Pronunciation with Native Speaker	Lesson Presentation	Lesson Presentation	Prep Time	**Day1 MUST DO Tasks:** *How to do Clear Roll-Call - ✓ Present - 0 absent *Discuss MUST be Present for $ *Certificate CORRECT Name List *..... *.....	
3:00 PM	Final Thoughts for the Day	Final Thoughts for the Day	Final Thoughts for the Day	Final Remarks		
4:00 PM	DONE for the DAY	DONE for the DAY	DONE for the DAY	DONE for the DAY		
5:00 PM / 6:00 PM	6:00 pm - Team Welcome Dinner	Dinner/Free Time	Dinner/Free Time	Dinner/Free Time	Dinner/Free Time	Dinner/Free Time

Appendix B

10 days of practicum teaching for the Practicum for Trainers program

Houaphan Intensive English Training #2 – M3-4/Summer 2023

Day/ Time	Monday July 24 Day 1	Tuesday July 25 Day 2	Wednesday July 26 Day 3	Thursday July 27 Day 4	Friday July 28 Day 5	Saturday July 29 Day 6	Sunday July 30
8:00 am-10:00 am	Opening Ceremony Hand out materials	**M3U2L3 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U4L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U6L2 Day 1 & 2**	Rebecca Workshop Group 1 **M3U9L3 Day 1 & 2** Group 2 **M3U8L3 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U1L1 Day 1 & 2**	
10:00 am-10:30 am	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	
10:30am-12:15 pm	**M3U1L2 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U3L2 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U6L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U7L1 Day 1 & 2**	Rebecca Workshop Group 2 **M3U9L3 Day 1 & 2** Group 1 **M3U8L3 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U2L3 Day 1 & 2**	REST
12:15pm-2:00 pm	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	
2:00 pm-4:00 pm	**M3U2L2 Day 1 & 2**	**2:00-3:00 Practicum Preparation** 1. Choose members for 5 groups 2. Choose lesson to teach 3. Began planning **3:00-4:00 Pre-Test** Grade as soon as possible and scores to Ann or Linda	**Practicum Preparation** Planning time with group for presentations	**M3U8L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M3U10L2 Day 1 & 2**	TBA	

Houaphan Intensive English Training #2 – M3-4/Summer 2023

Day/ Time	Monday July 31 Day 7	Tuesday August 1 Day 8	Wednesday August 2 Day 9	Thursday August 3 Day 10	Friday August 4
8:00 am-9:45 am	**M4U3L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U6L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U7L2 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U10L1 Day 1 & 2**	8-10:00 Practice for Performance
9:45am-10:15 am	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:15am-12:15 pm	**M4U3L3 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U6L3 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U7L3 Day 1 & 2**	TBA	10:30 Closing Ceremony
12:15pm-2:00 pm	Free	Free	Free	Free	
2:00 pm-4:00 pm	**M4U4L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U7L1 Day 1 & 2**	**M4U8L3 Day 1 & 2**	**Review** **45 min Post-Test** Grade as soon as possible and scores to Ann or Linda	Luncheon 12:00 Trainees and Trainers return home

NOTE: First 5 min of 8:00 and 10:30 session –phonics sounds – NO MORE THAN 5 Minutes!!

First 15 minutes of 2:00 session – phonics mini lesson and activity – NO MORE THAN 15 minutes!!!

Appendix C

A lesson in the 8th grade textbook

Lesson 3 Christmas

In this lesson students use the present simple tense for description, and learn about Christmas.

1. Vocabulary

Read and remember the meaning of the following words and expression.

Christmas card	ບັດອວຍພອນວັນຄຣິສມາສ	guest	ແຂກ
Christmas carol	ເພງຄຣິສມາສ	have a nap	ນອນພັກຜ່ອນ
Christmas Day	ວັນຄຣິສມາສ	plum pudding	ເຂົ້າໜົມ
Christmas tree	ຕົ້ນຄຣິສມາສ	present	ຂອງຂວັນ
Father Christmas	ພໍ່ເຖົ້າຄຣິສມາສ	turkey	ໄກ່ງວງ

2. Listen and repeat

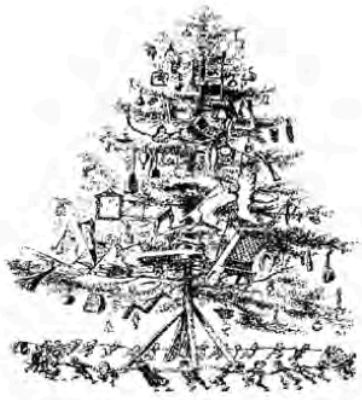
Listen and repeat the words above after the teacher.

3. Look and write

Look at the pictures and write the words given in the box under each picture.

Christmas carol	plum pudding	Father Christmas
Christmas tree	presents	Christmas cards
Christmas Day	turkey	

1. .....



2. .....

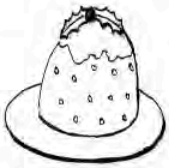
98

3.....

4. .....

5.....

6. .....



7. .....

8. .....

4. Point and say

Take turns to point and say about the pictures in Exercise 3.

Example:

Student A: points at picture 6
Student B: Christmas carols.

5. Listen and complete

Listen to the teacher and write the missing words.

On Christmas Eve, children are very excited when they go to bed because (1) _____ _____ will visit their house and leave (2) _____ under the Christmas tree. All children wake up very (3) _____ on Christmas morning, often (4) _____ it is still dark.

They want everyone to get out of (5) _____ so that they can open their (6) _____ presents. In our house we have a rule— (7) _____ the kids can open one present as soon as they get up, but then we (8) _____ wait until everyone is out of bed before we open the rest. On Christmas morning, children (9) _____ very happy, playing with their (10) _____ toys and wearing their new (11) _____. Some families go to church on Christmas morning. In my family we spend the morning (12) _____ for Christmas lunch. My father always does most of the (13) _____ at Christmas time. We usually have a lot of guests for Christmas (14) _____ and we always have the traditional turkey and plum pudding. My grandparents and other (15) _____ come over late in the morning. My sister and I wait impatiently for them to (16) _____ because we know they will bring us more (17) _____. Everyone eats and drinks (18) _____ much on Christmas day. The adults often have a nap in the (19) _____. In the evening, my family usually (20) _____some friends. While the adults talk and tell the same old (21) _____ every year, the children watch videos or (22) _____ with some of their presents. Sometimes we sing some Christmas carols. I usually feel like going to bed (23) _____ on Christmas night. It has been an exciting (24) _____, lots of friends, food and happiness. In bed, on Christmas night, I often (25) _____ about how lucky I am to spend such happy Christmas days.

6. Read and say

Read the text in Exercise 5 and give your opinions.

If a sentence is **correct**, say: *Yes, that's right.*
If a sentence is **incorrect**, say: *No, I don't think so.*
If you ***don't know***, say: *I'm not sure about that.*

Example:
A: Christmas day is on the 25th of December.
B: *Yes, that's right.*
A: Cheese is a traditional Christmas food.
B: *No, I don't think so.* Plum pudding is a traditional Christmas food.

1. Christmas day is on the 25th of December.
2. Cheese is a traditional Christmas food.
3. People find presents under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning.

Appendix D

Supplement for the 8th grade lesson

M3, Unit 8 (Festivals and Celebrations), Lesson 3 (Christmas)

Day 1

1. Review

Q: What do people do on Lao holidays? **A: They _____.** *(verb/verb phrase)*	**Verbs and Verb Phrases**
	dance eat and drink laugh sing talk give presents

2. New Vocabulary

Christmas Words	
Christmas	tree
card	cookie
carol	sweets

3. Base Sentence

Base Sentence 1

Before Christmas Day, people _____.
(verb phrase)

Verb Phrases:
give Christmas cards
go shopping
play Christmas music
sing Christmas carols
decorate a Christmas tree
decorate Christmas cookies
eat sweets
have parties

4. Base Sentence Activity

Choose an activity for the base sentence from the Language Activities Booklet.
Sing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas Song" from Song List attached.

5. Book Exercises

Do Exercises 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 from the book.

M3, Unit 8 (Festivals and Celebrations), Lesson 3 (Christmas)

Day 2

1. Review

Do you remember what happens at Christmas?
Complete each sentence with a Christmas item.

1. People buy _____. (presents)
2. People make _____. (cookies)
3. People decorate a _____. (Christmas tree)
4. People eat _____. (sweets)
5. People send _____. (Christmas cards)
6. People sing _____. (Christmas carols)
7. People play _____. (Christmas music)

Christmas Items
Christmas cards
Christmas carols
Christmas music
Christmas tree
presents
sweets
cookies

2. New Vocabulary

Other Words		
eve	excited	toy
early	plum pudding	guest
Father Christmas (Santa Claus)	turkey	nap

3. Base Sentence

Base Sentence 4

On Christmas Day, people _____.
(verb phrase)

Verb Phrases:
are excited
get up early
open presents
play with new toys
go to church
visit family
eat turkey
eat plum pudding
eat sweets
play Christmas music

4. Base Sentence Activity

Choose an activity for the base sentence from the Language Activities Booklet.

5. Book Exercises

Do Exercises 5, 6, 7, and 8 from the book.

Exercise 5 Christmas

Less Difficult Text:

On Christmas Eve, children are very excited when they go to bed because (1) _____ _____ will visit their house and leave (2) _____ under the Christmas tree.

All children wake up very (3) _____ on Christmas morning. They want everyone to get out of (4) ____ so that they can open their new (5) _____. On Christmas morning, children (6) _____ very happy, playing with their (7) _____ toys and wearing their new (8) _____.

Some families go to church on Christmas morning. In my family, we spend the morning (9) _____ for Christmas lunch. We usually have a lot of guests for Christmas (10) _____ and we have the traditional turkey and plum pudding. My grandparents and other (11) _____ come over late in the morning. My sister and I wait for them to (12) _____ because we know they will bring us more (13) _____. Everyone eats and drinks (14) _____ much on Christmas day. The adults often have a nap.

Sometimes we sing some Christmas carols. I usually feel like going to bed (15) _____ on Christmas night. It has been an exciting (16) _____, lots of friends, food, and happiness. In bed, on Christmas night, I often (17) _____ about how lucky I am to spend such happy Christmas days.

Answer Key:

1. Father Christmas 2. presents 3. early 4. bed	5. toys 6. are 7. new 8. clothes	9. cooking 10. Day 11. family	12. come 13. presents 14. too	15. early 16. day 17. think

---

Original Text with Changes:

On Christmas Eve, children are very excited when they go to bed because (1) _____ _____ will visit their house and leave (2) _____ under the Christmas tree. All children wake up very (3) _____ on Christmas morning, ~~often (4) _____ it is still dark.~~

They want everyone to get out of (5) ____ so that they can open their (6) _____ presents. ~~In our house, we have a rule - (7) _____ the kids can open one present as soon as they get up, but then we (8) _____ wait until everyone is out of bed before we open the rest.~~ On Christmas morning, children (9) _____ very happy, playing with their (10) _____ toys and wearing their new (11) _____. Some families go to church on Christmas morning. In my family, we spend the morning (12) _____ for Christmas lunch. ~~My father always does most of the (13) _____ at Christmas time.~~ We usually have a lot of guests for Christmas (14) _____ and we ~~always~~ have the traditional turkey and plum pudding. My grandparents and other (15) _____ come over late in the morning. My sister and I wait ~~impatiently~~ for them to (16) _____ because we know they will bring us more (17) _____. Everyone eats and drinks (18) _____ much on Christmas day. The adults often have a nap ~~in the (19) _____. In the evening, my family usually (20) _____ some friends. While the adults talk and tell the same old (21) _____ every year, the children watch videos or (22) _____ with some of their presents.~~ Sometimes we sing some Christmas carols. I usually feel like going to bed (23) _____ on Christmas night. It has been an exciting (24) _____, lots of friends, food, and happiness. In bed, on Christmas night, I often (25) _____ about how lucky I am to spend such happy Christmas days.

Appendix E

Rubric for an excellent lesson

Five-Star Lesson Rubric

Use the rubric below to evaluate another teacher's lesson

1 star = Beginning 2 stars = Developing 3 stars = Good 4 stars = Very Good 5 stars = Excellent

Classroom Teacher's Name: _____ Book: _____ Unit: _____ Lesson: _____

Review	Vocabulary	Base Sentence	Language Activity to Practice the Base Sentence	Activities from the Book
☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
How many stars is the Review?	**How many stars is the Vocabulary?**	**How many stars is the Base Sentence?**	**How many stars is the Language Activity?**	**How many stars are the Book Activities?**
Check (√) what you see as you watch the lesson.	*Check (√) what you see as you watch the lesson.*	*Check (√) what you see as you watch the lesson.*	*Check (√) what you see as you watch the lesson.*	*Check (√) what you see as you watch the lesson.*
A 5-star Review: □ Is short □ Reviews a Base Sentence and/or old vocabulary □ Prepares students for this lesson	**5-star Vocabulary:** □ Teacher says: What is this in Lao? □ Teacher says: In English we say ____. (Say the word two or three times.) □ Teacher writes new vocabulary on the board – spelling at the same time □ Teacher walks around the class saying the word □ Teacher makes sure students are writing the English and Lao in their notebooks □ Teacher reviews new vocabulary	**A 5-star Base Sentence:** □ Teacher explains the sentence □ Teacher substitutes vocabulary □ Teacher introduces the sentence to the whole class □ Teacher practices the sentence as half class & half class or with other groupings (students in the front & students in the back, these tables & those tables, boys & girls, etc.)	**A 5-star Language Activity:** □ Teacher builds understanding □ There is 100% class participation in the language activity	**5-star Book Activities:** □ There is 100% class participation in each book activity

What new ideas or techniques did you see in this lesson? Write them here:

Examining Students' Perspectives on Pedagogical Translanguaging in the Multilingual Classroom Context

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Abstract

This research study provided a basic understanding of pedagogical translanguaging and its importance in a multilingual classroom environment from the perspective of foreign language class students. The qualitative study, employing interpretive phenomenological analysis, investigated students' viewpoints on pedagogical translanguaging in a multilingual classroom setting, specifically within Pondicherry Central University's French certificate program in India. Through semi-structured interviews, 8 main themes and 35 subthemes were identified. Comparing these findings with the functions of translanguaging, similarities and differences in translanguaging application in language learning contexts emerged. Additionally, the study aimed to enhance instructional strategies tailored to meet the linguistic needs of diverse learners in multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: translanguaging, pedagogical translanguaging, multilingual context, functions of translanguaging

Pedagogical translanguaging, characterized by the intentional integration of students' multilingual resources into language and content area classes, has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach in diverse educational settings (Cenoz, 2017; Ganuza & Hedman, 2017). This approach acknowledges the linguistic diversity of students and leverages their existing language skills to enhance learning outcomes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020a, 2020b). In multilingual contexts, such as those found in Indian higher education institutions, where English serves as the medium of instruction amidst a rich linguistic tapestry, pedagogical translanguaging plays a crucial role in addressing linguistic disparities and promoting inclusive learning environments (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2021; Mukherjee, 2018). Research studies described in the literature highlight the importance of recognizing students' linguistic and multisemiotic repertoires as valuable resources for language learning (Cenoz, 2017). In the Indian context, where language diversity is a hallmark of society, incorporating pedagogical translanguaging practices becomes imperative for catering to the diverse linguistic needs of students (Agnihotri, 2014). Despite policy support for multilingual pedagogy (NCERT, 2005), challenges such as negative attitudes towards translanguaging practices and pressure to teach exclusively in English persist (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2021). Additionally, translanguaging practices extend beyond individual skills to encompass the interconnectedness of languages within a speaker's repertoire, offering rich resources for cross-linguistic comparison and metalinguistic reflection (De Angelis, 2007).

However, there remains a knowledge gap in understanding how translanguaging is used and perceived in higher education target language classes where English is the medium of instruction. Moreover, the transmission of translanguaging practices among peers and its implications for promoting a deeper understanding of the target language and improving weaker language skills remain underexplored (Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). Addressing these disparities is crucial for informing language instruction practices and promoting inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse linguistic needs of students.

Addressing the complexities of pedagogical translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts, this study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. How is translanguaging utilized in a university target language multilingual class where English is the medium of instruction from students' perspective?
2. What are the perceptions of students regarding the use of pedagogical translanguaging in their language learning experience?
3. How are translanguaging practices shared among peers, and how do they contribute to better understanding the target language and improving weaker language skills?"

Investigating these research questions, the study explored how translanguaging procedures support effective communication and language acquisition skills for multilingual learners in higher educational settings. The study focused on highlighting the diverse functions of translanguaging and its relevance in culturally diverse environments like India, emphasizing practical implications for educators and higher education authorities for designing instructional strategies for language classes, especially foreign language. Comprehensively examining

existing gaps, the study provides valuable insights for enhancing language pedagogy and promoting inclusive education strategies.

Literature Review

Translanguaging

Translanguaging, which originated from Welsh educational contexts and was introduced by educator Cen Williams, represented a pioneering pedagogical approach emphasizing the fluidity and integration of bilingual language practices (García & Li Wei, 2014). Initially, translanguaging referred to a pedagogical practice wherein students alternated between languages for receptive or productive purposes (García & Kano, 2014). Over time, scholars like Canagarajah (2011) and Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) have explored diverse interpretations of translanguaging, culminating in a multifaceted understanding. It represents bilingual speakers' strategic selection of linguistic features from their repertoire to construct language practices suited to specific communicative situations (García & Kano, 2014).

In educational settings, translanguaging is often manifested as a pedagogical approach that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy by facilitating the ideal integration of multiple languages into instruction and learning activities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). This pedagogical practice involves the intentional alternation or switching between languages for both input and output within the same learning activity (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Curriculum for Wales). For instance, learners may receive information in one language and then engage with that information in another language, thereby deepening their understanding and proficiency in both languages (Curriculum for Wales).

Furthermore, translanguaging extends traditional language boundaries, enabling individuals to surpass fixed language identities imposed by nation-states (García Wel, 2014). It facilitated the exchange of linguistic and cultural experiences among individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds, unearthing buried histories and understandings embedded within rigid language identities (García & Wei, 2014). Through translanguaging, individuals forged new linguistic connections and constructed hybrid identities that surpassed conventional linguistic confines, fostering inclusivity and cultural richness in educational situations and beyond.

Multilingualism

The transition towards pedagogical translanguaging in multilingual education represented a notable departure from conventional language teaching methodologies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2018). This innovative approach, centered on multilingualism, challenged the traditional practice of language compartmentalization, acknowledging the varying language proficiencies among learners within their linguistic repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014). Unlike previous approaches, which measured language skills against native speakers, the focus shifted towards recognizing language abilities as dynamic and shaped by diverse experiences.

Moreover, multilingualism emphasized the intricate competencies of multilingual speakers, termed "multicompetence," encompassing a range of linguistic resources and interactional strategies (Cook, 1992). Despite this, societal preferences still favored native speaker instructors, often overlooking the communicative strengths of multilingual educators (Llurda & Chapelle, 2014). Furthermore, multilingualism extended beyond individual skills to embrace the interconnectedness of languages within a speaker's repertoire (De Angelis, 2007). This rich linguistic resource facilitated cross-linguistic comparison and metalinguistic reflection, yet the prevailing ideology of language separation hindered its optimal utilization (Canagarajah, 2007). The social context also played a pivotal role, shaping multilingual practices and influencing language use based on situational demands and societal language hierarchies (Cenoz & Bereziartua, 2016). Hence, embracing multilingualism entailed recognizing and harnessing the dynamic interplay of languages within diverse social settings to support effective communication and language learning.

Translanguaging Considered as Natural Practice Among Multilingual

Translanguaging, observed among multilingual individuals, stands out as a natural and innate practice. Instead of being confined by language boundaries, speakers effortlessly transition between linguistic codes in their daily interactions, influenced by personal experiences and social contexts. This phenomenon, termed idiolects, reflects the unique linguistic patterns developed by individuals (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). Beyond educational settings, translanguaging permeates various social interactions, integrating diverse linguistic structures and cognitive systems to facilitate effective communication (Wei, 2011). This inclusive approach challenges traditional linguistic hierarchies, emphasizing the holistic nature of language use. Individuals adeptly utilize their entire linguistic and sensory repertoire without compromising their identities, promoting inclusivity in communication (García, 2011). Communities worldwide, especially, those in Indian cities and students in Indian central universities, embrace translanguaging as a natural and effective means of expression. In everyday contexts, translanguaging fosters the synthesis of semiotic signs, contributing to the formation of new cultural identities (Wei, 2011; Mazzaferro, 2018). In a globalized world, linguistic competence extends beyond mere language proficiency, encompassing the ability to interpret diverse semiotic cues within one's linguistic repertoire (García, 2009).

Pedagogical Perspective of Translanguaging

In pedagogy, translanguaging refers to the intentional incorporation of students' multilingual resources into both language and content subjects. This approach, known as pedagogical translanguaging, has garnered significant attention in recent translanguaging research (Cenoz, 2017; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020a, 2020b; Ganuza & Hedman, 2017; Probyn, 2015, 2019), especially within educational settings. While the use of multiple languages in teaching has historical roots in language education (Cook, 2010), pedagogical translanguaging research gained prominence alongside the multilingual shift in language learning and education scholarship (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014, 2019; Ortega, 2019). This shift reflects the evolving multilingual landscapes worldwide, driven by technology-assisted globalization and

increased mobility (Blommaert, 2010). Pedagogical translanguaging research emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' existing knowledge, including their linguistic and multisemiotic repertoires, as valuable resources. This approach often aligns with a social justice agenda, aiming to address the educational needs of language-minorities students for equitable education and societal inclusion. Cummins (2019) identified numerous terms referring to similar activities, such as "cross linguistic pedagogy," "multilingual teaching strategies," and "bilingual teaching strategies." Additionally, terms like "translanguaging instructional practices," "translanguaging approaches to teaching 'and' translanguaging pedagogies" have been used in the literature (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have introduced terms such as "dynamic plurilingual pedagogies" (Garcia & Flores, 2012), "translanguaging for the classroom," and "translanguaging as pedagogy" (Paulsrud et al., 2017). Additionally, terms like "bilingual instructional strategies" and "translanguaging practice" have been employed (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), stressing the diverse conceptualizations and applications of translanguaging in pedagogical contexts.

Pedagogical Translanguaging in Indian Higher Education Classes

In Indian higher education, where English serves as the medium of instruction, classrooms embody a rich diversity of languages, reflecting the nation's linguistic diversity (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2021). This multicultural setting, characterized by fluid language practices, stems from India's historical tradition of multilingualism (Agnihotri, 2014), now recognized as translanguaging. Despite English's official designation as a second language, its usage varies widely across different societal strata, from the burgeoning middle class's adoption of 'Hinglish' to the majority for whom English remains largely foreign (Mukherjee, 2018; Rao, 2013). However, in higher education, there's a discernible trend towards early adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction, although policies differ across institutions (Central Square Foundation, 2020a, 2020b).

In this context, the integration of language and content learning becomes paramount, as emphasized by the National Knowledge Commission (2006). Translanguaging emerges as a practical approach to address linguistic disparities among emergent bilinguals, leveraging stronger language skills to support weaker ones (Weinreich, 1953). It fosters a more holistic language acquisition process, contributing to enhanced academic literacy, particularly in content and language-based instruction contexts (National Knowledge Commission, 2006). Furthermore, recent research underscores the prevalence and benefits of multilingual practices in English classrooms in Indian higher education. Despite policy support for multilingual pedagogy (NCERT, 2005), negative attitudes persist, as evidenced by instances of "guilty translanguaging" and pressure to teach exclusively in English (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2021). Nevertheless, embracing pedagogical translanguaging offers a promising pathway to address linguistic disparities and promote academic success. By incorporating translanguaging strategies into teaching practices, educators can create inclusive learning environments that support students' language development and engagement with academic content (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2021; Durairajan, 2017).

Functions of Translanguaging in Target Language Classes in Higher Education

In higher education target language classes, translanguaging, as defined by scholars like Gutiérrez (2008) and Ryu (2019), involved the hybrid use of languages, where meaning was negotiated and created through various interactional contexts (Gutiérrez, 2008; Ryu, 2019). This approach facilitated collective meaning-making among multilingual communities, despite challenges such as linguistic shame highlighted by García (2011). An analysis was conducted to identify the functions of translanguaging employed by multilingual instructors and students in the study, revealing its role in facilitating communication and learning processes among diverse linguistic groups. In this study, researchers utilized Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan's (2018) framework, which identifies four functions of translanguaging: knowledge construction, classroom management, interpersonal relations, and personal and affective meanings (Sapitri, Gede, & Myartawan, 2018). Knowledge construction involves using translanguaging to understand the subject matter, while classroom management entails the instructor's use of translanguaging to regulate students' behavior during the learning process. Interpersonal relationships refer to the use of translanguaging by the teacher to foster connections with students, and personal and affective meanings encompass the teacher's expression of personal experiences, feelings, and sociocultural functions. These functions were observed in the study, informing the understanding of translanguaging practices in the research context.

Additionally, Wang's (2018) model, encompassing interpretative, managerial, and interactive functions, was employed to establish the definitive translanguaging functions for this research (Wang, 2018). These frameworks provided comprehensive insights into the diverse roles and applications of translanguaging in the context of the study. The interpretative function involves using translanguaging as a pedagogical tool to explain various linguistic aspects of the target language, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural concepts. This function was observed in the study, as instructors often used translanguaging to scaffold grammar concepts, introduce new vocabulary, and clarify cultural concepts. The managerial function encompasses the use of translanguaging practices for providing instructions, feedback, praise, encouragement, and planning assignments or examinations. This function was evident in the study, as instructors engaged in activities such as giving instructions and feedback during their classes. Finally, the interactive function pertains to translanguaging practices initiated by students to enhance classroom teaching and learning interactions. This function was frequently observed during peer-based activities in the classroom setting. Together, these translanguaging functions shed light on the various ways translanguaging is utilized in the research context to facilitate language learning and teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this paper revolves around the concept of translanguaging, which views language speakers' diverse linguistic and semiotic practices as integral components of their dynamic language repertoire (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Translanguaging emphasizes the fluid use of multiple languages to create meaning, particularly

in educational contexts, with the overarching goal of promoting social justice and amplifying marginalized voices (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Rooted in Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, translanguaging theory highlights the coexistence of diverse socio-ideological voices within language and the dynamic interaction between them (Bakhtin, 1981). Furthermore, the framework incorporates the concept of multimodality, expanding beyond traditional linguistic boundaries to encompass various cognitive and semiotic systems (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Multimodality acknowledges the holistic nature of human communication, incorporating visual, textual, spatial, and other embodied forms of meaning-making (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Lin's exploration of multilingual and multimodal resources in second language science education exemplifies the benefits of leveraging diverse linguistic and cultural resources to enhance students' understanding of complex concepts (Lin, 2006). Wu and Lin's proposal of the Multimodalities-Entextualization Cycle (MEC) further illustrates how integrating various linguistic and semiotic resources can facilitate dynamic meaning-making in digital and multimodal environments (Wu & Lin, 2019).

In practice, studies by Wu and Lin (2019) and Liu, Lo, and Lin (2020) demonstrate the application of translanguaging pedagogy in diverse educational settings, enhancing language learning and promoting inclusivity. Additionally, research by Zhu and Gu (2022), Pacheco et al. (2022), Scott & Cohen (2023), Ou et al. (2022), and Schall-Leckrone (2023) highlights the role of multimodal communication in supporting translanguaging practices and fostering meaningful engagement with language and culture. Moreover, translanguaging theory intersects with social justice principles, advocating for equitable learning opportunities and challenging dominant language ideologies (Vogel & García, 2017; North, 2006). Prioritizing diverse language practices and promoting inclusivity, a social justice framework for translanguaging seeks to empower students to engage meaningfully with language and culture in educational settings (García & Kleifgen, 2020). Despite the burgeoning interest in translanguaging, differing interpretations of the concept emphasis the need for ongoing exploration and critical engagement, particularly in diverse linguistic contexts such as Indian secondary education (García & Lin, 2017; Canagarajah, 2013; Heugh, 2021).

Method and Methodology

Qualitative Method

The rationale for utilizing qualitative research methodology lies in its roots in anthropological and sociological fieldwork, aimed at understanding people's lives (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative research seeks to explore inquiries, gather artifacts, and analyze them to gain deeper insights into the subject under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Young & Babchuk (2019), qualitative research encompasses various approaches grounded in inductive reasoning derived from participants' perspectives collected in natural settings. This method primarily relies on words rather than numerical data points (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Choosing a qualitative design for this study is appropriate due to its focus on positioning participants as experts in their own experiences, perspectives, and knowledge by emphasizing their viewpoints in natural settings, thus shifting authority from the investigator to the participant (Babchuk, 2019; Creswell and Poth, 2016).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was incorporated into the research design as the research approach for analyzing the data. It was employed to examine the lived experiences of participants, discovering the students' perspectives on pedagogical translanguaging in the multilingual classroom context. This qualitative approach was well-suited to explore the subjective meanings and interpretations of individuals in response to the language learning experience, especially when translanguaging was used in support of that pursuit (Smith et al., 2021).

Semi-Structured Interview and Questions

The aim of the interview questions was to elicit rich, detailed accounts of personal experiences in line with IPA principles (Smith et al., 2009 & 2021). In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect in-depth data from participants. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 50 minutes, during which the investigator took notes and posed probing questions to facilitate smooth conversation. The participants' willingness to participate in the research was considered as consent. The semi-structured interview questions were crafted with a focus on specific lived experiences, utilizing open and exploratory language. Nine questions in total were designed to gather rich and detailed accounts of personal experiences, aligning with an inductive approach and drawing from seven foundational principles outlined by Smith et al. (2009) and Smith & Larkin (2021). For instance, the question "What aspects of learning French did you find most enjoyable?" was categorized under "Focusing on Specific Lived Experiences," aimed at exploring the interviewee's personal engagement with French language acquisition. Similarly, the questions "How did you incorporate your knowledge of other languages to aid in understanding or learning French? Can you provide examples?" focusing on practical applications of multilingual skills. Questions like "Did you think it was important for teachers to be familiar with their students' other languages and cultural backgrounds? Why or why not?" and "How would you describe your teacher's attitude towards the use of your other languages in French class?" were classified under "Capture Perceptions and Sense-Making". Furthermore, questions such as "Did your teacher encourage you to utilize your other languages while learning French? If so, in what ways?" pertained to "Contextualized Inquiry". Lastly, questions such as "Did your teacher assist you in using your repertoire of languages to learn French? If yes, could you elaborate?" and "How do you think your teacher could have better utilized your languages in the French classroom?" were categorized under "Grounding Inquiries in Specific Contexts," probing practical support and possibilities for enhancing language integration within French learning contexts. These categorizations reflected the detailed and contextual nature of the interview questions, tailored to capture diverse experiences and perspectives related to language learning in educational settings. To ensure this in designing interview questions, researchers used open-ended questions that allowed participants to freely express their experiences. Additionally, the questions took into account contextual factors that may have influenced participants' interpretations.

Researchers Positionality and Reflectivity

Reflexivity is crucial in qualitative research as it allows researchers to recognize and address their biases, assumptions, and personal experiences that may influence how they interpret data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This self-awareness also explains why researchers choose particular topics, benefiting both themselves and their readers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, all authors have had direct experience with translanguaging in higher education, having completed their education in English within multilingual environments. The lead author has had firsthand exposure to pedagogical translanguaging through master's and doctoral studies. Given the diverse linguistic landscape of India's higher education, where students encounter multiple languages such as their mother tongue, English, Hindi, and state native languages, where their higher education is pursued, this study aims to explore the significance of translanguaging in multilingual educational settings.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations for the study were paramount, particularly regarding informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and sensitivity to participants' needs. Prior to commencing the research, participants were fully informed about the research's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, and their right to refuse or withdraw participation was respected. Measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of participants' personal information and responses, with identifiers removed and data securely stored. Throughout the research process, researchers maintained sensitivity to participants' values, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds, treating them with dignity and respect. Attention was given to avoiding imposition of researchers' biases or assumptions on participants, and efforts were made to communicate effectively, especially with participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, researchers were mindful of power dynamics, striving to conduct the study in a fair and respectful manner, free from pressure on participants to provide particular responses. Lastly, in disseminating findings, researchers prioritized responsible and respectful use, avoiding harm or stigmatization of participants or groups and transparently acknowledging any limitations or generalizations drawn from the data.

Research Settings

The Center for Foreign Languages at Pondicherry Central University served as the primary research setting for the study. Situated in Pondicherry, India, this center offered various language programs, including the French certificate program. The focus of the research was specifically on the classroom environment within the French certificate program.

About the Center for Foreign Languages

Established as an innovative initiative in June 2009, the Center for Foreign Languages at Pondicherry Central University addresses the contemporary need for multilingual proficiency in today's rapidly evolving global landscape. Offering courses in French, Japanese, Korean,

German, and Arabic, the center caters to both university students and local residents of Pondicherry. With a maximum intake of 20 students per year, the center equips individuals with valuable language skills, enhancing their job prospects and facilitating cultural exchange in various fields, including business, literature, music, and film.

About the Target Language Course

The French language certificate course (course code: 434) at Pondicherry Central University is designed to provide individuals with fundamental French language skills. To enroll, applicants must have passed the Higher Secondary Examination or its equivalent. The course accepts a maximum of 20 students annually, with admission based on the marks obtained in the qualifying degree. Priority is given to students already enrolled in university departments. The course, named "Add On Courses – Evening Session," spans six months and includes classes held for two hours per day, four days a week, ideally scheduled from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM.

Sampling Technique and Participants

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the study, aiming to recruit nine student participants from a French language class. Despite the voluntary nature of participation, all students included in the study were observed to be multilingual, with English identified as their dominant language and used as the medium of instruction for French (Target Language). This approach aligned with qualitative research methodologies that prioritize depth of understanding over breadth, targeting specific individuals who could provide pertinent and useful information related to the study's objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling strategies ensured that specific cases relevant to the research questions were included in the final sample, reflecting the assumption that diverse perspectives held by particular individuals were essential for capturing varied insights on the study's themes (Robinson, 2014). The details of the participants are presented in Table 1, outlining their linguistic backgrounds and key characteristics.

Table 1

Participants Details

Students	Major Subject	Target Language (TL)	TL Level	Mother Tongue or Native Language	Officially learned language(s)	Informally learned language(s)
Madhu	Education (M.Ed)	434-French	Beginner	Tamil	Tamil English Hindi (beginner)	Telugu Malayalam (peer influence)
Beauty	Education (M.Ed)	434-French	Beginner	Bengali	Bengali English Hindi (all language fluent)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Ishani	Education (M.Ed)	434-French	Beginner	Bengali	Bengali English Hindi (all language fluent)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Akhila	English (MA)	434-French	Beginner	Malayalam	Malayalam English Hindi (all language fluent)	Tamil Telugu (peer influence, Move watching)
Sonali	International business (MBA)	434-French	Beginner	Odia	Odia English Hindi (all language proficient)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Ramadevi	History (MA)	434-French	Beginner	Telugu	Telugu (fluent) English (fluent) Hindi (beginner)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Yasar	Sociology (integrated)	434-French	Beginner	Hindi	Hindi English (Fluent)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Prathush Kumar	Mathematics (integrated)	434-French	Beginner	Odia	Odia Hindi English (all language fluent)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)
Vijaya Kumar	English (MA)	434-French	Beginner	Kannada	Kannada English (both fluent) Hindi (beginner)	Tamil (peer influence and local use)

Data Analysis

The present study utilized the IPA method to analyze data, yielding results for the main research questions (Smith et al., 2021). The IPA analytical process began with systematic reading and exploratory note-taking to immerse researchers in participants' narratives (Smith et al., 2021). Descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes categorized aspects of the narrative, fostering deep exploration and interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Transitioning to formulating experiential statements, researchers crafted concise summaries, balancing specificity with conceptual depth (Smith et al., 2021). These statements captured psychological processes and contextual aspects of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2021). Subsequently, experiential statements were clustered and refined to elucidate prominent features of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2021). A table of personal experiential themes was compiled, followed by cross-case analysis and grouping experiential themes (Smith et al., 2021). This iterative process captured the collective essence of participants' perspectives on pedagogical translanguaging in the multilingual classroom context (Smith et al., 2021).

Results

The results section examined the eight main themes that emerged and 35 subthemes (See Table 2: master table of group experiential themes) of student perspectives on pedagogical translanguaging in a multilingual classroom context. Through qualitative analysis, insights were gained into the various ways students engage with language learning and cultural integration. The findings enlightened on the effectiveness of translanguaging practices in promoting language independence, fostering multicultural enrichment, and enhancing overall learning experiences. The theme of Dynamic Language Exploration encapsulates various facets of engaging with the French language in an interactive manner. Participant Beauty, expressed a perspective on French language learning, stating, "The most enjoyable aspect of learning French is discovering new words and expressions that broaden my vocabulary," while another student (Akhila) reflected on their experience, remarking, "Interactive and hands-on activities in French classes to be the most enjoyable, as they provide practical opportunities to apply and reinforce learning in a fun and engaging way." This theme comprised subthemes such as discovering new words and expressions, exploring French literature, art, and cuisine, mastering pronunciation and intonation, feeling accomplishment with proficiency development, sense of improvement with each lesson, excitement of mastering a new language and culture, embracing the challenge of learning French, and communicating with native speakers. Learners derived satisfaction from continuous improvement, gaining confidence, and embracing challenges as opportunities for growth. Moreover, they found joy in mastering not only a new language but also a new culture, while also valuing the enriching interactions with native speakers, which contributed to their overall language learning experience.

The theme of Language Learning Approaches encompassed students' diverse strategies, such as recognizing linguistic similarities, utilizing gestures, and immersing themselves in French media. Students drew on their linguistic backgrounds to aid understanding. Madhu noted, "Similarities between Tamil and French words are noted." Additionally, they employed

mnemonic devices and immersive techniques, like watching French movies. Conversely, Culturally Responsive Teaching focused on educators fostering inclusivity and acknowledging students' backgrounds. Vijaya Kumar stated, "Teachers acknowledge diverse linguistic backgrounds and encourage language sharing." This accentuated the importance of educators integrating cultural references and creating opportunities for language exchange, contributing to a supportive learning environment.

In Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments, students emphasized the importance of teacher awareness, communication enhancement, and fostering a supportive atmosphere. Sonali stressed, "It's important for teachers to be familiar with students' languages and cultural backgrounds to create a supportive learning environment." Additionally, students emphasized the need for tailored teaching methods, as Prathush Kumar mentioned, "Understanding linguistic backgrounds promotes inclusivity and helps tailor teaching methods to meet individual needs." Meanwhile, Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity stress teachers' positive attitudes towards linguistic differences and support for language diversity. Ramadevi noted, "teachers are supportive of using languages in French class, creating opportunities for language sharing." This reflects the significance of recognizing and encouraging linguistic diversity to promote a positive learning environment.

In Language Independence, students stressed the importance of utilizing native languages to aid in understanding French concepts and recognizing the value of linguistic diversity. Akhila pointed out, "Teachers encourage to use native languages outside of class for self-learning purposes," heightening the role of familiar languages in comprehension. Additionally, students advocated for incorporating native languages or majority languages spoken by students into classroom discussions, promoting inclusivity and facilitating better understanding. Beauty mentioned, "The teacher conducts classes in English and French, allows to utilize mother tongue outside of class to reinforce student understanding of French," demonstrating the benefits of embracing linguistic diversity. The theme of Native Language Integration elucidated how students use their mother tongue to enhance French language learning. Subthemes included reading materials in French for proficiency, using the native language to understand course content, assisting peers with comprehension and assignments, and fostering diverse language exchanges in the classroom. These aspects illustrated the diverse ways students leverage their native language to support and enrich their French learning journey.

On the other hand, Multilingual Classroom Enrichment revealed the importance of integrating diverse languages into learning activities. Students suggested that incorporating native languages into assignments and discussions fostered a supportive environment and enhanced comprehension. Ishani highlighted, "Although the class primarily revolves around English and French, students are permitted to use native language to aid in comprehension and completion of assignments," indicating the positive impact of such practices on student engagement and learning outcomes. The results suggested translanguaging fostered positive experiences by promoting language exploration, diverse learning approaches, and inclusive classroom environment. Students reported enjoying the process of discovering new languages and

cultures, utilizing their existing linguistic backgrounds, and appreciating teachers who acknowledge their diverse backgrounds.

Table 2

Master Table of Group Experiential Themes

No.	Themes	No.	Subthemes
1	Dynamic Language Exploration	1	Discovering new words and expressions
		2	Exploring French literature, art, and cuisine
		3	Mastering pronunciation and intonation
		4	Feeling accomplishment with proficiency development
		5	Sense of improvement with each lesson
		6	Excitement of mastering a new language and culture
		7	Embracing the challenge of learning French
		8	Communicating with native speakers
2	Language Learning Approaches	1	Recognizing Linguistic Similarities with proficient languages
		2	Relating to Other Languages Identifying Grammar Patterns of French
		3	Creating Language Connections with know (native) languages
		4	Utilizing Gestures and Visualizations for better understanding
		5	Mnemonics and Rhymes Listening and Immersion of new words
3	Culturally Responsive Teaching	1	Teacher's Acknowledgment of Linguistic Background of each student
		2	Encouragement to Use Native Languages for better understanding
		3	Creation of Opportunities for Language Sharing in classroom
		4	Integration of cultural references
4	Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments	1	Importance of teacher awareness
		2	Enhancement of Communication and Understanding
		3	Promotion of Inclusivity and Diversity
		4	Fostering a Supportive Learning Environment
		5	Enrichment of Learning Experience
5	Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity	1	Teacher's positive attitude to linguistic difference
		2	Support for language diversity
		3	Openness to multilingualism
		4	Encouragement of diverse language Use
6	Language Independence	1	Native languages as aid in understanding French concepts.
		2	Recognize the value of students' linguistic diversity and encourage to share language skills
		3	Incorporate students' native languages or majority student's fluent languages into discussions
7	Native Language Integration	1	Read materials in French
		2	Use of mother tongue to enhance understanding of the materials
		3	Use of mother tongue to peers assist in comprehension and completion of assignments
		4	Creation of opportunities for diverse language sharing
8	Multilingual Classroom Enrichment	1	Deeper cultural understanding among students.
		2	Resources and supplementary materials in English or mother tongue
		3	Encouraging group discussions in English and know language (based on preference of student)

Comparison of the Themes with the Functions of Translanguaging

When comparing the main themes with the functions of translanguaging identified by Wang (2018) and Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan (2018), it became evident that there were both similarities and differences in how translanguaging was applied in language learning contexts. The presence of these functions in the study is based on the themes shown in Table 3 for Wang's three translanguaging functions and Table 4 for Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan's four translanguaging functions, respectively.

Table 3

Three Translanguaging Function by Wang (2018)

Translanguaging Function	Description	Presence in the Theme
Interpretative Function	Translanguaging serves as a pedagogical tool to elucidate linguistic aspects of the target language, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural concepts.	Dynamic Language Exploration(T1) Language Learning Approaches(T2)
Managerial Function	Involves the utilization of translanguaging practices for providing instructions, feedback, praise, encouragement, and planning assignments or examinations.	Culturally Responsive Teaching(T3) Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments(T4)
Interactive Function	Translanguaging practices initiated by students to enhance interactions and engagement in classroom teaching and learning	Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity(T5) Language Independence (T6) Native Language Integration(T7) Multilingual Classroom Enrichment(T8)

When compared with translanguaging functions (Wang, 2018), the emerged themes were observed to play diverse and essential roles within the higher educational setting. The Interpretative Function of translanguaging functioned as a pedagogical tool employed by instructors to clarify linguistic aspects of the target language, encompassing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural concepts, as demonstrated in the themes of Dynamic Language Exploration (T1) and Language Learning Approaches (T2). The Managerial Function involved utilizing translanguaging for delivering instructions, feedback, praise, encouragement, and organizing assignments or assessments, as evident in Culturally Responsive Teaching (T3) and Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments (T4). Furthermore, the Interactive Function of translanguaging was initiated by students to enhance classroom interactions and engagement, illustrated in themes such as Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity (T5), Language Independence (T6), Native Language Integration (T7), and Multilingual Classroom Enrichment (T8). These findings reflected a comprehensive and cohesive effort to integrate translanguaging into educational practices, promoting linguistic inclusivity and effective communication within diverse multilingual learning environments.

Table 4

Four Translanguaging Functions by Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan (2018)

Translanguaging Function	Description	Presence in the Theme
Knowledge Construction	Utilizing translanguaging to facilitate comprehension of the subject matter, including providing pedagogical scaffolding, reinforcing concepts, and reviewing topics.	Dynamic Language Exploration (T1) Language Learning Approaches (T2) Language Independence(T6) Native Language Integration (T7)
Classroom Management	The instructor's use of translanguaging to regulate student behavior, including negotiating task instructions, promoting engagement, enforcing disciplinary measures, and providing guidance	Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments(T4) Multilingual Classroom Enrichment(T8)
Interpersonal Relations	Employing translanguaging to establish connections with students, foster a supportive classroom environment, share humor, commend students, and provide motivation.	Culturally Responsive Teaching (T3) Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity (T5)
Personal and Affective Meanings	Involves the expression of personal experiences, feelings, and sociocultural factors through translanguaging, contributing to a more inclusive and emotionally engaging learning environment	Not related

The translanguaging functions identified by Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan (2018) demonstrated significant roles compared with emerging themes within higher educational contexts. The Knowledge Construction function involved leveraging translanguaging to enhance comprehension of subject matter by providing pedagogical scaffolding, reinforcing concepts, and facilitating discussions, as evident in the themes of Dynamic Language Exploration (T1), Language Learning Approaches (T2), Language Independence (T6), and Native Language Integration (T7). Classroom Management utilized translanguaging for regulating student behavior, including task instructions negotiation, promoting engagement, enforcing discipline, and offering guidance, as observed in Cultivating Inclusive Learning Environments (T4) and Multilingual Classroom Enrichment (T8). The Interpersonal Relations function utilized translanguaging to establish connections with students, foster a supportive classroom environment, share humor, commend students, and provide motivation, as highlighted in Culturally Responsive Teaching (T3) and Fostering Linguistic Diversity and Positivity (T5). These translanguaging functions collectively contributed to creating inclusive and effective multilingual learning environments by supporting comprehension, managing classroom dynamics, and nurturing positive teacher-student relationships.

Discussion

In multilingual classroom contexts, the integration of pedagogical translanguaging represents a pivotal shift in language education, challenging traditional methodologies and addressing the diverse linguistic needs of students. This study aimed to explore students' perspectives on the efficacy and relevance of pedagogical translanguaging, examining its potential to enhance language learning outcomes and promote inclusivity. By recognizing the dynamic nature of language proficiency and the unique linguistic repertoires of learners, this study sought to discover innovative approaches to language instruction that prioritized students' existing knowledge and cultural backgrounds. Through an analysis of translanguaging practices in higher education target language classes, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how pedagogical translanguaging could support effective communication and language learning in diverse educational settings.

The findings of this study reveal the multifaceted nature of translanguaging functions in higher education target language classes, as elucidated by Wang (2018) and Sapitri, Gede, and Myartawan (2018). Firstly, the interpretative function of translanguaging emerges as a pedagogical tool for explaining various linguistic aspects of the target language, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural concepts. This function facilitates knowledge construction by scaffolding grammar concepts, introducing new vocabulary, and clarifying cultural nuances, thus enhancing students' understanding and proficiency in the target language. Secondly, the managerial function of translanguaging plays a crucial role in classroom management, encompassing activities such as providing instructions, feedback, praise, encouragement, and planning assignments or examinations. Utilizing translanguaging practices in these areas, instructors could effectively regulate students' behavior, foster a positive learning environment, and support students' language development.

Lastly, the interactive function of translanguaging facilitates peer-based interactions and collaborative learning experiences. Students initiated translanguaging practices to enhance classroom teaching and learning interactions, promoting active engagement and participation. Through peer-based activities, students leveraged their multilingual resources to support each other's language learning journey, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity in the classroom.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Limitations inherent in this study pertain primarily to the potential biases associated with participant selection and the methodological approach employed. The selection of participants, while purposeful, may not have fully encapsulated the diversity of perspectives within the population of interest, potentially skewing the findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data gathered through semi-structured interviews introduces the possibility of subjectivity and social desirability bias (Van de Mortel, 2008), thereby compromising the objectivity and validity of the study's conclusions. Additionally, the study's exclusive focus on a specific cultural and educational context in India may restrict the applicability and

generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. To mitigate these limitations and enhance the robustness of future research endeavors, it is imperative to adopt more inclusive sampling strategies that encompass a broader range of demographic characteristics and educational settings. Moreover, employing mixed-methods approaches that integrate qualitative data from interviews with quantitative data from observational studies could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This interdisciplinary approach would allow for triangulation of findings, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the research outcomes. Furthermore, conducting comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts would facilitate the identification of universal principles as well as context-specific factors influencing students' experiences with pedagogical translanguaging. Additionally, future research endeavors could make a detailed study into the perspectives of educators and administrators regarding the implementation of translanguaging strategies, elucidating the challenges and facilitators encountered in multilingual classroom environments.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it becomes evident that pedagogical translanguaging holds substantial significance in fostering effective communication and facilitating language acquisition within multilingual classroom environments. The study identified eight key themes and thirty five subthemes within a French language class. The main findings highlight the importance of promoting linguistic diversity and creating inclusive learning environments. And also demonstrated how translanguaging practices are integrated into language learning and classroom interactions. Incorporating translanguaging practices into language instruction, educators have the potential to stablish inclusive learning environments that adeptly address the diverse linguistic needs of students. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize and address the limitations inherent in translanguaging, as well as to explore potential challenges and barriers to its successful implementation. These may include issues related to pedagogical strategies, cultural considerations, and institutional support. Critically examining these aspects, educators and policymakers can work towards optimizing the integration of translanguaging into pedagogical practices, thereby maximizing its benefits while mitigating potential drawbacks. Moving forward continued research and professional development initiatives are warranted to further refine understanding of translanguaging and its role in enhancing language learning outcomes in diverse educational settings. Ultimately, by embracing the complexities of translanguaging and proactively addressing associated challenges, educators can cultivate inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that empower all students to succeed academically and linguistically. Practical applications of the study's insights include integrating translanguaging into language instruction to support diverse student linguistic needs. This involves developing inclusive pedagogical approaches that celebrate linguistic diversity and enhance communication. Furthermore, providing professional development for educators on translanguaging strategies is essential. Collaboration with higher education authorities to establish supportive institutional frameworks for effective translanguaging in education is also recommended. These actions collectively aim to create inclusive learning environments that optimize language learning outcomes for all students.

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Using Screencast Video Feedback in the 21st Century EFL Writing Class

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Abstract

Giving feedback has always been the backbone of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing class. Written corrective feedback focuses on responding to students' written work by extensively correcting their errors or offering constructive suggestions for improvements. The process of digitalization of education offered an alternative to teachers' written feedback and opened up new opportunities to give video feedback to students. The latter has the potential of improving feedback provision through video capture tools, such as screencasts. The purpose of the research project was to investigate the effectiveness of using screencast video feedback on EFL writing and explore students' perceptions of receiving video feedback for their written assignments. The mixed-method research was carried out with a group of 40 English language students in their academic writing class at a private university in Georgia. To investigate students' perceptions, an online questionnaire was applied that focused on the benefits perceived by the students and technical issues faced during the process of video feedback. The qualitative data was obtained from semi-structured interviews in which the participants talked about the impact of the technology and their overall experience of using it. The findings of the study revealed that video feedback appeared to have been very interactive and supportive in the learning-to-write in a foreign language process. The participants also regarded video feedback as supportive, engaging, multimodal and easily comprehensible.

Keywords: screencast video feedback, written corrective feedback, EFL writing, 21st-century feedback.

Providing feedback on students' work has always been an inseparable component of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing class. Quality feedback enhances EFL students' active participation and academic performance in their writing processes. It promotes a constructive learning environment and enables the development of teacher-student rapport (Solhi & EğiNli, 2020). Without feedback, students' written assignments lose purpose and become vain. Critique and subsequent advice not only improve EFL students' learning process, but together they also enrich teachers' performance, emphasizing the key areas of further improvement in the teaching and learning process. Effective feedback provision serves as a motivator and is an essential component for writing skill development (Armağan et al., 2016).

The traditional method of feedback provision centers on giving students written commentary that mainly accentuates the identification of linguistic errors in a given assignment (Yu et al., 2020). This approach is known as written corrective feedback (WCF) and refers to providing explicit corrections for students' work. Two categories of WCF have been identified, direct and indirect. Direct written corrective feedback entails giving suggestions, praises or criticism through a written annotation. EFL teachers use given margins to provide error corrections, whereas indirect feedback serves to give students written comments on their errors, but does not provide error correction (Gasmi, 2017). Although, there is a clear distinction between direct and indirect ways of giving feedback, both types of feedback focus on the identification of students' linguistic errors and providing or suggesting corrections (Farjadnasab & Khodashenas, 2017).

There are several studies that explore the benefits of WCF arguing that this type of assessment provides a valuable contribution to writing skill development and the augmentation of students' lexical range (Arrad et al, 2014). Scholars believe that WCF enables learners to realize and correct their errors, thus, continuing to be a crucial pedagogical practice that is oriented towards the improvement of EFL students' writing skills (Bitchener, 2012; Hylan & Hyland, 2006). Since WCF is still widely used in EFL writing classes, teachers still rely on its potential for improvement in writing accuracy. Furthermore, WCF is thought to increase students' vocabulary as well as grammatical accuracy (Kang & Han, 2016).

Notwithstanding the numerous benefits of WCF, this type of instructive provision has attracted much criticism. One of the reasons for the debate is that WCF does not correspond to the current changes in the field of feedback delivery. This type of corrective reaction is believed to lack the purpose of providing precise feedback to students and appears to be time-consuming (Armağan et al., 2016). Moreover, WCF is said to often fail to lead EFL students to successful error correction and the improvement of their writing skills (Simard et al., 2015). Some researchers even advocate for the abolishment of WCF on the grounds that error correction does not lead to the enhancement of writing skills and accuracy (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Shintani & Ellis, 2013). Additionally, it is argued that WCF can be harmful, requiring considerable energy and time.

The emergence of technology transformed the educational system and brought the urgency to reconsider feedback practices. Screencast technology enabled EFL teachers to experiment with

giving oral feedback that focused on recording screens while commenting on students' assignments (Xie et al., 2022). Corrective commentary given through technology served to provide a multimodal alternative to WCF and created an interactive atmosphere for English language learning. Technology-enhanced feedback, which can be listened to, watched or replayed multiple times, appears to create an opportunity to go beyond the boundaries of space and time (Özkul & Ortaçtepe, 2017).

Due to an elevated interest in modern technology, video feedback has gained substantial attention in the field of EFL writing. One of the ways of using video feedback is through screencasting that is "the process of recording a digital display with voiceover" (Cunningham, 2019, p. 224). In other words, screencast technology allows educators to capture their computer screens while providing oral feedback to students (Elola & Oskoz, 2016). This study aimed to experiment with implementing technology in feedback provision practice. In particular, it sought to investigate EFL students' perception of using screencast video feedback as an alternative to WCF and explore challenges faced by students in the process. The paper draws on students' surveys and their interview results as well as reviews of scholarly articles on the area of the imposition of screencast video feedback. To investigate students' perception of using screencast video feedback, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What are EFL students' perceptions of using screencast video feedback?
RQ2: What are the benefits of screencast video feedback?
RQ3: What challenges do EFL students face with regard to receiving screencast video feedback?

Literature Review

The advancement in digital tools enabled EFL teachers to better address the deficiencies that were created by written corrective feedback. They vastly contributed to the modification of feedback practices that emphasized their multimodal nature and ease of responding to students' electronic assignment submissions (Cunningham, 2019). Such multimodal feedback is referred to as screencast video feedback since it is recorded using screencast technology and accompanied by the instructor's narration (Cranny, 2016; Séror, 2013). The purpose of screencast video feedback is to provide verbal commentary on students' work and assist them towards self-correction. Unlike WCF, the instructor does not provide direct or indirect error correction on students' assignments, rather locates their errors, specifies the areas of improvement and invites students to address their mistakes (Whitehurst, 2021). In other words, EFL students are exposed to listening to their instructor giving feedback by commenting on areas of improvement.

Screencast video feedback is relatively new and is conducted by recording a computer's on-screen activities (Séror, 2013). The video is accompanied by the narration in which the instructor highlights students' errors and provides suggestions. In other words, the teacher records his/her spoken comments while highlighting students' errors. Screencast technology is different from webcams through which teacher talk is recorded without displaying students'

written work. With screencast technology, on the other hand, students can view their written assignments and listen to the instructors' oral comments (Bush, 2021). Besides, such video feedback resembles a conversation between the instructor and the student; it can be personalized and "contributes to students' multimedia learning experiences by emotionally connecting to students and increasing their interests" (Cheng & Li, 2020, p. 2). For this reason, video feedback has been welcomed as a new alternative and a preferred way of feedback provision for many EFL practitioners (Bush, 2021; Cheng & Li, 2020; Cunningham & Link, 2021).

Benefits of Using Screencast Video Feedback

There are multiple studies that outline the benefits of using screencast video feedback in EFL writing classes. Scholars claim that screencast video feedback positively boosts EFL students' engagement by listening to educator commentary and revising their written words (Ali, 2016; Cranny 2016). High levels of student interaction can also be attributed to a new and innovative mode of feedback through the use of video technology. The study conducted by Bush (2020) showed that screencast video feedback was beneficial for boosting students' involvement since the participants appeared to be very focused on video in their feedback-receiving process. An increased level of participation was also reported in Ali's (2016) and Cranny's (2016) studies. Scholars argue that students' active interaction in this process can be attributed to the innovative and novel nature of the instructional approach. Besides, the participants' comments indicated the importance of feedback being multimodal which also contributed to their involvement. Screencast video feedback enables the instructor to easily highlight or underline students' written errors and provide clear strategies for improvement. Such practices are conducive to increased participation and promote a sort of dialogue between the teacher and feedback receivers. This subsequently promotes enhancing comprehension and boosting the connection concerning teaching and learning (Cranny, 2016).

Screencast video feedback is believed to be personal and conversational which contributes to the establishment of teacher-student rapport. The instructor's conversational manner and friendly tone are perceived to be encouraging and supportive in the EFL writing process (Ali, 2016; Anson et al., 2016). Elola and Oskoz (2016) also emphasize that the conversational nature of video evaluation is highly conducive to building interpersonal relationships that can raise awareness of using a different type of assessment. Scholars argue that this type of feedback is unlike written corrective critique in a number of ways and can lead to successful attainment of the language. Another study carried out by Cunningham (2017) explored the differences between written corrective feedback and screencast video feedback. The latter was perceived as helpful in creating an autonomous environment, whereas the participants perceived written corrective feedback as authoritative. An autonomous environment, in return, contributes to the teacher-student interpersonal relationship that is thought to be crucial for the enhancement of foreign language learning.

Furthermore, screencast video feedback promotes more flexibility than written corrective feedback. Students can access their video feedback at any time and view the recording as many

times as they wish (Cranny, 2016; Lee, 2017). Flexibility in the feedback provision process has been reported as being extremely important since EFL students may not comprehend feedback easily. By viewing a video recording, students can pause and rewind if need be, they can also make some notes and process feedback at their own pace. Video feedback is thought to be more practical and effective in improving the quality of communication as well as being accessible from most devices.

Drawbacks of Using Screencast Video Feedback

Despite a number of benefits, screencast video feedback has some disadvantages. According to Voelkel and Mello (2014), one of the challenges can be attributed to students' lack of emotional readiness to accept the instructor's comments on their written work. They may feel demotivated and frustrated while listening to their instructor directly addressing them. Moreover, students may experience nervousness and anxiety about being unfamiliar with a new technology. It is also believed that if feedback is not provided constructively by the instructor, it may cause annoyance among students. However, some scholars argue that the feeling of uneasiness is normal until students are more familiar with the format of video feedback (Bush, 2020). As soon as students become accustomed to the corrective process via video, they will be more receptive to the corrections. A teacher's positive demeanour can also be conducive to processing feedback as constructive and supportive rather than critical.

Another challenge is related to screencast video feedback being a novel approach that many educators find difficult to handle. Allocating appropriate time might pose another challenge for teachers. In a classroom where there are many students, recording screencast feedback might seem time-consuming (Ali, 2016). A technical issue has also emerged since recording feedback requires advanced technical skills that many teachers may not possess. Furthermore, video format is not always compatible with other devices which can pose further problems for students in terms of viewing or downloading a video. The quality of a video may also undermine the value of screencast video feedback and demotivate students to listen to it (Lee, 2017). Scholars also argue that considering various types of learning styles, screencast video feedback cannot be accessible for all learners. Moreover, students who experience visual or learning impairment may find video feedback difficult to access (Chalmers, MacCallum, Mowat & Fulton, 2014; Johnson & Cooke, 2015).

The Implication of Using Screencast Video Feedback in EFL Writing Class

There is a prolific number of studies that explored the repercussion of using screencast video feedback on EFL students' writing assignments. Elola and Oskoz (2016) in their research argued that the main focus of video feedback is on the content, structure and organization of learners' written work rather than providing suggestions for grammatical errors. They claimed that this type of feedback is particularly beneficial for improving higher-order thinking skills (Ali, 2016; Ducate & Arnold, 2012). Moreover, due to its nature to be specific and engaging, screencast video feedback encourages revision. While listening to the instructor's oral comments, students are shown ways to revise their assignments and correct their errors, thus

leading to writing skill improvement (Ali, 2016). It is also argued that students are more likely to achieve success in revision through video feedback than through written feedback even though the latter is more precise (Elola & Oskoz, 2016). Correspondingly, video feedback has been proven effective for correcting and addressing linguistic errors in written assignments.

As mentioned above, screencast video feedback is personalized and conversational, which enables learners to feel more comfortable than being in face-to-face situations. Vincelette and Bostic (2013) stated that facing an instructor while giving feedback may create pressure, while video feedback can eliminate such constraints on students and make feedback more accurate. Additionally, the interaction without the physical presence of the teacher makes feedback more responsive and initiates a follow-up discussion with the teacher. The scholars also claimed that screencast video feedback allows teachers to provide an alternative assessment enabling the development of EFL students' writing skills.

Some scholars researched EFL students' perceptions of using screencast video feedback in their writing class (Elola & Oskoz, 2016; Vincelette, 2013; Ice et al, 2010). As reported by the participants in Elola's and Oskoz's study, screencast video feedback was perceived positively due to its multi-sensory nature. The students viewed video feedback as multi-functional and specific. It was claimed that screencast video feedback could provide more explanations and suggestions that are necessary to address the issues in writing assignments (Vincelette, 2013).

Methodology and Methods

The study took a mixed-method approach through which quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for analysis. Creswell and Clark (2017) characterize the mixed-method approach as a methodology that offers a more thorough understanding and enhances the validity of the findings. Quantitative data were collected through surveys that were administered at the end of the research period. The survey was generated by the researcher using Google Forms. The aim of using the survey was to investigate the impact of receiving screencast video feedback on Georgian EFL writing students' assignments and their perception of using it. It consisted of three parts: Part 1 of the survey focused on EFL students' reflections on receiving video feedback whereas the second part dealt with the technical issues experienced while listening. The last part of the survey investigated the participants' overall experience of using screencast video feedback. The survey questions were designed by the researcher. The questionnaires/interview questions were then examined and analysed by two independent experts who provided invaluable feedback on the improvement of the content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also launched and piloted with 10 students prior to the implementation of the research. The pilot participants filled in the questionnaire in a 5-minute interval. They responded to all the questions and commented that the items were clear and easy to understand.

Quantitative methodology was applied to gain more insight into the benefits of using video feedback. The researcher opted for this methodology to delve deeper into quantitative results and supplement the data. This approach provided additional insight into the mixed-methods

methodology and yielded a more robust research framework (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants using the Zoom platform. The participants were asked 5 questions that were designed by the researcher. By applying qualitative methodology, the researcher was able to enrich the results of the study. Data gleaned from the survey were statistically analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24). SPSS is an ideal package for quantitative data analysis since it is user-friendly and powerful software for all sorts of analytical data (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021). On the other hand, NVivo was utilized for interview transcript analysis since it aided qualitative data analysis (Welsh, 2002).

Participants

The research sample consisted of 40 undergraduate students studying English Writing as part of their English Philology programme. The majority of the participants (90%) were females, whereas males constituted 10% of the research sample. Most of the participants (97%) were freshmen students of English Philology.

The study was conducted at one of the private universities in Georgia. All participants were first verbally informed about the nature of the research and asked to volunteer to take part in the study. The participants were given a consent form before the start of the study period to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. The form outlined the framework of the study and their right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research. As regards confidentiality and anonymity, the participants were informed that the survey completion was anonymous. In semi-structured interviews, the participants were again reminded of their voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research with no further consequences. The information provided was strictly used within the scope of this research only and has not been disclosed to any other third party.

Procedure

The survey was administered using Google Forms at the end of the semester. The duration of the research was three months. In the first part of the survey, the participants were asked to reflect on the video feedback they had received on their written assignments and select the appropriate option for each statement. In particular, they were asked to respond to the questions on the clarity of feedback received, ability to revise their work, suggestions for improvement and personalization of feedback. The second part of the questionnaire evaluated the challenges of using screencast video feedback in the EFL writing process. The last part of the questionnaire investigated the overall experience of using video feedback. The statements were organized on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally agree), 2 (agree), 3 (neutral), 4 (disagree), and 5 (totally disagree). The Likert scale enabled the participants to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a metric scale. On the Likert scale, each statement unveils a distinct dimension of attitude toward the issue, thereby inherently interconnected with one another (Joshi et al., 2015).

The data collected were entered in SPSS 24 for statistical analysis. Semi-structured interviews were administered through the Zoom platform. The participants were invited to share their experiences of using screencast video feedback and identify the benefits and challenges they faced while using the technology. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. The informants were asked the following questions: *1. How did you perceive screencast video feedback?* 2. *What aspect of screencast video feedback have you found the most beneficial?* 3. *What challenges have you encountered while listening to video feedback?* 4. *What is your overall experience of using screencast video feedback*? The interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo. The researcher adapted an open coding system to generate the themes quickly. The transcript analysis revealed 6 major themes.

Findings

The first phase of the data collection was conducted through a survey. The first part of the survey focused on the affordances of screencast video feedback. In the second part of the survey, the participants responded to the statements that dealt with the challenges of using screencast video feedback. The third part of the questionnaire investigated the participants' overall experience of using screencast video feedback.

Table 1

Benefits of Using Screencast Video Feedback

The video feedback:	1 TA	2 A	3 N	4 D	5 TD	Mean	St. Dev	Sig. 2-tailed
Provided a clear understanding of my assignment's content.	77.5%	12.5%	7.5%		2.5%	1.4	0.84	.000
Enabled me to rethink and reevaluate my assignment.	31.5%	20%	2.5%		5%	1.4	0.77	.000
Proved beneficial as it allowed me to revisit my assignment for revisions.	70%	20%	5%		5%	1.50	0.98	.000
Permitted me to gain a better understanding of my mistakes.	70%	20%	7.5%		5%	1.55	1.01	.000
Was comprehensive, highlighting the main strengths and weaknesses of my assignments.	72.5%	17.5%	7.5%		2.5%	1.43	0.84	.000
The instructor commented on my accomplishments.	72.5%	15%	10%		2.5%	1.43	0.87	.000
Included the instructor's recommendations on areas for improvement.	80%	10%	7.5%		2.5%	1.35	0.83	.000
Provided individualized feedback tailored to my personal needs.	80%	7.5%	10%		2.5%	1.38	0.86	.000

As can be seen in Table 1, a significant majority of the participants (77.5%, n=31) perceived video feedback as providing a clear understanding of their assignment content. A similar percentage, 70% (n= 28) regarded video feedback as beneficial in terms of understanding their mistakes and revising their assignments. However, 5% of the participants (n=2) totally disagreed with this statement. Almost 90% of the participants totally agreed or agreed that feedback in the video was individualized and tailored to students' personal needs (n=35). The same percentage of the participants (90%, n=36) also responded positively to video feedback being helpful in providing recommendations and suggesting areas for improvement. Generally, the participants' responses were consistent and positive which was confirmed by the mean scores ranging between 1.38 and 1.50. As regards standard deviation, they varied between 0.77 and 1.01 indicating that the responses provided were not dramatically different.

Table 2

Challenges of Using Screencast Video Feedback.

Video feedback:	**1 TA**	**2 A**	**3 N**	**4 D**	**5 TD**	**Mean**	**St. Dev**	**Sig. 2-tailed**
Was time-consuming.	17.5%	17.5%	25%	22.5%	17.5%	3.02	1.32	.000
The audio quality was unclear.	5%	2.5%	10%	45%	37.5%	4.05	1.01	.000
Accessibility was straightforward.	62.5%	17.5%	12.5%	2.5%	5%	1.70	1.11	.000
Accessibility was challenging for me.	72.5%	10%	12.5%	2.5%	2.5%	1.52	0.98	.000
The instructor's tone was supportive and friendly.	80%	10%	7.5%		2.5%	1.35	0.83	.000

As Table 2 statistics indicate, one of the major challenges that emerged from the survey was concern about video feedback being time-consuming. Thirty-five per cent of the participants (n= 14) strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, whereas 10% (n=10) remained neutral. The participants also commented on the quality of the video and a small minority of them (7% n=3) indicated it was unclear. However, for the majority of the participants (82.5%, n=32), the quality of the video was not an issue with 10% (n=4) remaining neutral. The highest mean score (m=4.04) that was observed could be attributed to the fact the statement result could be understood as reversed, since, a negative response, in this case, might be taken as a positive result for the research. As regards the accessibility of video feedback, the participants were positive with 80% totally agreeing or agreeing with the statement, whereas 7.5% (n=3) disagreed or totally disagreed.

Table 3

Overall Experience of Using Screencast Video Feedback

Video feedback	1 TA	2 A	3 N	4 D	5 TD	Mean	St. Dev	Sig. 2 tailed
Enhances my writing process, making it more interesting.	80%	10%	7.5 %		2.5%	1.35	0.8	.000
is very interactive and engaging	72.5%	20%	5%		2.5%	1.40	0.8	.000
Deepens my understanding of the subject.	65%	22.5	10 %		2.5%	1.55	0.9	.000
Motivates me to participate in my writing process actively.	80%	5%	12. 5%		2.5%	1.40	0.9	.000
Is advantageous for improving my English writing skills.	70%	20%	5%	2.5%	2.5%	1.47	0.9	.000

As it can be observed from Table 3, the participants' overall experience of using screencast video was very positive, with 90% of the participants (n=36) totally agreeing or agreeing that video feedback made their writing process interesting and enhanced it. Slightly more than 90% of the participants (n=37) also commented on video feedback being very interactive and engaging. Moreover, 85% (n=34) of the participants identified video feedback as motivating in their writing process, whereas a small minority of the participants (n=2.5) responded to this statement negatively. Furthermore, a significant majority of the participants (90%, n= 36) perceived video feedback as advantageous in their writing process.

The second phase of the research concerned analyzing the interview transcript. As it was mentioned in the description of the data collection methodology, the researcher utilized NVivo, went through the coding process, and created the following 6 codes: clear to understand, conversational, motivational, self-reflection, instructor's friendly tone, writing skill improvement. Table 4 summarises the semi-structured interview findings:

Table 4

Semi-structured Interview Results

Main theme	Number	Quotes
Self-reflection	**8**	"I liked that the lecturer pointed out my mistakes so I could understand better where I had made mistakes so I can take those in account in the future."
		"I like it so much. It is easier to understand my mistakes and visualize my mistakes. Everything was real nice" "I love everything about video feedback because it has a lot of benefits. It makes clear in which part I made a mistake and helps me to understand every detail better".
		"It was an interesting addition, easy to improve those mistakes that were highlighted in the video."

		"It helps me to understand what I have done wrongly, and I like it."
		"The video feedback was very engaging. It was interesting to listen to my teacher talking to me about my mistakes. I tried to listen and improve."
		"Always looking forward to the instructor's feedback, I liked the way she praised me and commented on my errors."
		"I try to always correct my mistakes and follow the teacher's advice."
		"I like how my lecturer gives me a smiling face every time despite the minor mistakes."
		"I personally loved it when I got video feedback. It motivated me to do my assignments perfectly and get that smiley face again."
		"The most pleasant thing is that through the video I hear praise for every paragraph and what I wrote is praised, mentioned and appreciated."
Motivational	**6**	"There is a zest in this format of feedback, it is more live and I get much more pleasure receiving it now than in past in written form."
		"Hearing the teacher's encouraging words, praising me and my work made me feel really appreciated and respected."
Instructor's friendly tone	**6**	"I like the lecturer's attitude; she evaluates us very positively and objectively."
		"I liked the supportive tone of the lecturer."
		"Hearing teachers' encouraging words, praising me and my work made me feel really appreciated and respected."
		"As always lecturer had a friendly tone and that is the thing which I love so much. Please keep going with video feedback. Thank you for helping and supporting us every time."
		"The thing, which I liked the most, was the friendly language and tone."
		"The lecturer was very friendly and supportive, which made the learning process enjoyable."
Conversational	**5**	"It feels like I have a conversation with my lecturer which is absolutely fantastic."
		"I have never had such an experience before."
		"I absolutely loved that the lecturer was assessing my assignment and in meantime, she was talking as if I was there."
		"I liked the fact that it felt like the lecturer was directly talking to me."
		"The video feedback was very engaging. It was interesting to listen to my teacher talking to me about my mistakes. I tried to listen and improve."
Clear to understand	**4**	"Feedback was clear to understand."
		"I loved how the teacher thoroughly explained and discussed every single aspect of my writing, making comments and recommendations for future work as well."
		"I liked the way the lecturer described every detail clearly."

		"I liked the way the lecturer explained everything. Video feedback was super time-consuming and understandable."
Writing Skill development	**3**	"I love how everything is described in the video. Either good or bad things in my writing so I can think about it and know what I should improve."
		"Video feedback is very beneficial, and I hope the intructor will continue to do it in the future."
		I find video feedback really helpful and useful to use in assessment."

Table 4 indicated that the first theme that emerged from the interview was self-reflection. According to the comments that are also included in the table above, the participants viewed video feedback as very helpful to understand and revise their errors. It was also mentioned that screencast video feedback enabled the participants to visualize their errors and correct them. The second major theme was labelled as screencast video feedback being motivational. Thirdly, the participants highlighted the instructor's friendly tone that made them feel appreciated and valued: "*Hearing teacher's encouraging words, praising me and my work made me feel really appreciated and respected*." They also indicated that the instructor's friendly tone was supportive and enjoyable. The participants also felt that screencast video feedback was conversational since they felt the instructor directly addressing them: "*Video feedback was very engaging. It was interesting to listen to my teacher talking to me about my mistakes. I tried to listen and improve*."

Discussion

The findings reveal that screencast video feedback had a positive impact on Georgian EFL students' writing. Screencast video feedback was seen as beneficial and clear in providing guidance and error corrections for their writing assignments. The participants' responses showed that screencast video feedback enables them to revisit their assignments and revise them.

Screencast video feedback is perceived as personalized and individualized. The participants also highlighted the conversational nature of screencast video feedback that made them feel valued and appreciated. As regards the challenges, screencast video feedback appeared to be time-consuming for 35% of the participants. For the minority of the participants, video feedback was seen as unclear (7.5%).

The findings of this study align with the results of the research conducted by Ali (2016) who investigated the effectiveness of screencast video feedback in EFL students' writing classes. The mixed-method research conducted with undergraduate students revealed that screencast video feedback was perceived as engaging, supportive, clear and personal. Moreover, the scholar argues that screencast video response helps students reshape their ideas and get more organized in writing essays. Similarly, the study conducted by Cunningham (2019) explored EFL students' perception of using screencast video feedback as an alternative to written corrective feedback. The research findings revealed that the participants preferred screencast video feedback due to it being individualized as opposed to written corrective criticism which

they perceived as very specific. The scholar claims that to yield the best results, a combination of both modes of feedback can be applied.

More recent research carried out by Xie et al. (2022) investigated the impact of screencast video feedback on students' writing performance. The experiment conducted by the researchers involved one group of students who were exposed to screencast recording feedback, whereas the second group received traditional written corrective feedback. The findings of the research revealed that the experimental group students performed better than the control group. As with the current study, the participants' responses were similarly positive towards receiving screencast video feedback since it was perceived as supportive in strengthening teacher-student interaction.

Recommendations

Since most of the respondents regarded screencast video feedback as individualized and interactive, one of the recommendations of the present paper is to enable EFL instructors to use screencast video feedback in their teaching practices. The participants of the study saw the video commentary as stimulating and encouraging. Additionally, they found it readily accessible and highly beneficial for self-editing and revising. The findings also showed positive attitudes towards screencast video feedback, emphasizing its clarity, and capacity for revision. For this reason, EFL teachers are recommended to experiment using screencast video feedback in writing provision. Moreover, the benefits of screencast video feedback that emerged from the research highlight its significance and potential value in future EFL curricula. Curriculum designers are advised to redesign their existing curriculum by incorporating video feedback in teaching and assessment. As regards the challenges, the screencast video feedback emerged to be time-consuming for the majority of the participants. For further consideration, EFL students should receive enough technical support with the accessibility of video feedback.

Conclusion

This paper explored the effectiveness of providing screencast video feedback in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classes, highlighting its strong usefulness in students' writing skill development. It investigated the concept of written corrective feedback and its main empathy in providing error corrections. The paper also reviewed screencast video feedback as a new alternative to EFL writing classes. The latter offers several benefits, including increased student engagement, personalized feedback and flexibility in writing assessments. However, there are some challenges associated with this approach, such as students' emotional readiness to accept video feedback and technical issues.

The present study employed a mixed-method approach to investigate 40 EFL students' perceptions of screencast video feedback. Quantitative data were collected through surveys, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The results gleaned from quantitative data suggested that screencast video feedback has a number of benefits. The majority of the participants perceived screencast video feedback as personalized and

conversational providing support for assignment revision. Screencast video feedback was also viewed as engaging and motivational. Moreover, the participants' responses demonstrated that screencast video feedback was easy to access. It was believed to have hugely contributed to self-correction and revising. The results also indicated positive perceptions of screencast video feedback, with participants highlighting benefits such as clarity, revision ability, and personalized feedback. Challenges included technical issues and emotional readiness to accept feedback.

The analysis of semi-structured interview data revealed six main themes. The participants emphasized the benefits of video feedback for self-reflection, noting its clarity in understanding mistakes and its role in facilitating revision. Additionally, they highlighted the motivational aspect of video feedback, appreciating the instructor's friendly tone and feeling valued and respected. Moreover, participants found video feedback conversational and engaging, contributing to an enjoyable learning experience. Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the clarity, supportiveness, and effectiveness of video feedback in developing their writing skills.

Research Limitations

The present study has identified a number of limitations. One of the concerns is the sample size. The research sample comprised 40 undergraduate students from a specific English philology program at a private university in Georgia. A small sample size and homogeneity of the participants limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of EFL students. Moreover, having conducted the study in one specific institutional context may restrict the applicability of the findings to other educational settings. Another limitation is the duration of the study. The present paper presented a small-scale study that lasted for three months. Longitudinal research tracking EFL students' progress over an extended period of time would offer comprehensive insight into the benefits and challenges of screencast video feedback.

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Connecting Student Interest and Motivation in English to the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

English education in Japan has traditionally focused on grammar over communication, and the country has struggled to compete internationally in terms of English proficiency scores. As the country works toward the internationalization of higher education, improving English education is an important issue. One potential solution is the use of topics that elicit students' interest and make them feel like part of the international community. This paper explored the use of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a topic due to their global importance and position, along with English, as a key to furthering the global citizenship of Japan's youth. Because of the substantial number of SDGs, not all goals can be realistically addressed in a single course. Therefore, to find topics tailored to students' interests in sustainability, this study examined the relationship between student interest in sustainability, International Posture (IP), and personal connection to SDGs. A survey was given to 266 first-year university students in general education English classes. A separate multiple regression analysis was conducted for the target variable, "Topic Interest" within English class for each goal, to determine how the effects and significance of variables differed for each SDG. Results showed that the IP subscale, "Intergroup Approach Tendency," was significant for 14 and "Personal Value" was significant for 16 of the goals. For internationally minded students engaged in the study of English as a foreign language, the SDGs could be a useful motivational tool.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), higher education, interest, International Posture (IP), motivation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

English education is a highly scrutinized topic in Japan. Despite international success in math, science, and reading scores, Japan has continued to struggle in English results. Even after spending at least 6 years studying English, many students enter the university lacking confidence in the subject. This is not to say that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) lacks the intention to improve English education. On the contrary, programs like the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program and widespread use of Assistant Language Teachers have been implemented to bring an international perspective to the learning environment, and curriculum guidelines phased in from 2013 have encouraged teachers to employ more communication-based teaching methods (Bartlett, 2017). Despite these continued efforts, the grammar translation method and audio-lingual method remain the dominant teaching styles in EFL classrooms, continuing to be prioritized over communication-based methods (Clayton & Yamada, 2022). This has long been attributed to the necessity of preparing students for the university entrance exams (K. Kikuchi, 2006). Yet, despite recognition of issues, systematic changes have been slow and faced difficulties in implementation (Butler et al., 2022).

However, once students have completed the entrance exams, the opportunities for English education suddenly broaden. Although they may no longer have the native teachers to provide them with a connection to the global community, students are no longer bound by the pressures of entrance exams. Despite the negative attitudes toward English that persist until the university, evidence shows that students at the college level can easily be guided to view English as a Lingua Franca, and through this change in perspective see the communicative purpose of English, without focusing too much on grammatical perfection (Ishikawa, 2017). This makes higher education courses an excellent time to enable students to start viewing and studying English as a tool for international communication. The relative freedom that university courses have in curriculum development has the potential to enable this change, and carefully chosen subject matter could help students to recognize themselves as part of an international community with which they can interact.

Of the many issues that are relevant in the world today, the SDGs represent content rich themes that may lead to greater motivation for language development. As the government calls for the incorporation of SDGs into curricula, it is a natural consequence that they would also join the program of study for English courses. This integration could link students to an imagined global community of English speakers. However, with seventeen goals, it is difficult to incorporate all goals into a single class. Therefore, this paper sought to gain a better understanding of which SDGs could best be incorporated into the English classroom to connect to students' sense of global community. Specifically, it examined how interest in studying each SDG is affected by International Posture, a construct of motivation in language learning that measures students' sense of connection to the global community.

Literature Review

English Education and Global Citizenship in Japan

The Japanese government has continued to make efforts to improve English education. Following the national curriculum, most students began studying English in junior high school until it was introduced into elementary schools as comprehensive learning in 2002. While this class did include some English lessons, the primary focus was on "international awareness" and not specifically focus on language skills. English was formally adopted as a once-a-week subject in 2011 from the fifth grade. Most recently, in 2020, the curriculum was adjusted again to start in the third year of elementary school. Simultaneously, the number of classes per week in junior high school was increased from one to two.

The 4th Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, provided by MEXT lists five fundamental principles for the future of education in the country (Cabinet of Japan, 2023). The first among these is equipping humans with the necessary skills to be capable resources while continuing to study with the goal of contributing to the sustainable development of global society. The specific goals include increased inbound and outbound study abroad, internationalization, and improved foreign language education. The indicators for progress, however, specifically reference achieving certain levels of English by graduation. This push for internationalization is occurring throughout Japanese education, but a Central Council for Education (2018) plan cites higher education as a particularly important section for globalization.

Struggles with Japanese English Education

Despite this emphasis on English and globalization, Japan continues to struggle with overall English attainment levels. In 2023, it ranked at only 87th according to the EF English Proficiency Index, below fellow Asian countries of China and Korea (Education First, 2023). The majority of students spend their early years of education focusing on English study primarily for the purpose of passing tests and succeeding in the university entrance exam (Yamada, 2018). The grammar translation method has also dominated education methods, due to its comparative ease as a method for the teacher (Jones, 2019). Despite attempts to introduce native speakers to support classroom activities and create a natural and authentic outlet for English use through the employment of Assistant Language Teachers, many students continue to struggle to build confidence and comfort in English (Hashimoto & Glasgow, 2021).

At the university level, English students are less bound by the necessities of entrance examinations. While some students may continue to focus on language proficiency tests like the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), university students also have the option to study English abroad or more in depth because it connects to their major. The Japanese government has also taken the initiative to attempt to increase the number of English-medium instruction courses in universities through the Top Global University Project, an improvement on previous attempts at internationalizing higher education (Rose & McKinley, 2018). In individual courses, syllabi have less need to focus on teaching to the test and can

more freely implement a variety of topics and teaching styles. Designing curricula that provide English learners with a sense of imagined community, interesting topics in which they can engage, and practical uses of language that encourage communication has the potential to spark student interest and motivation in English language learning.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations. Their goal is to achieve sustainable development throughout the world and achieve peace and prosperity for all. Many universities in Japan work to incorporate SDGs into their courses, cultivate research opportunities around global issues, and rank internationally in their contributions toward the goals (Ashida, 2023). As universities work to integrate SDG education throughout their curricula, their potential importance in the English classroom becomes apparent. Not only are they a current and relevant international topic, but their inclusion as a classroom topic could also be motivational for students as they recognize themselves as part of the international community that is trying to achieve the goals.

There are 17 goals, and they cover a wide variety of topics (Table 1). The topics range from general areas of environment to human rights, and economic development. Considering the limited length of courses, it would be difficult to incorporate all of the goals into a single course. Careful consideration should be taken in choosing which goals best mesh with the communicative goals of an English class and the sense of international community that courses aim to foster. Student interest is an important motivating factor in education. Classes tailored to student interest have the potential to improve learning outcomes, such as improving reading comprehension (Asgari et al., 2019), and increasing vocabulary learning and recall (Cancino, 2023). It is important to select the goals that are most suited to student interests, specifically within the second language (L2) classroom.

Table 1
List of the 17 SDGs

Goal 1. No poverty
Goal 2. Zero hunger
Goal 3. Good health and well-being
Goal 4. Quality education
Goal 5. Gender equality
Goal 6. Clean water and sanitation
Goal 7. Affordable and clean energy
Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth
Goal 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Goal 10. Reduced inequalities
Goal 11. Sustainable cities and communities
Goal 12. Responsible consumption and production
Goal 13. Climate action
Goal 14. Life below water
Goal 15. Life on land
Goal 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions
Goal 17. Partnership for the goals

Japan's International Posture

Despite this, Japan has often been criticized for a failure to take interest in and respond to international society. Before the pandemic, Kuroda et al. (2018) found that despite domestic statistics showing some increase in outbound study abroad, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Japan's number of outbound exchange students had been falling. This was attributed to the difference in the more lenient domestic definition of what was considered study abroad. Many questioned whether this downward trend could be attributed to the insular mindset or inward-looking nature of Japanese youth, and indeed some studies found evidence that inward-looking natures could lead to increased concerns towards issues of study abroad (Kojima et al., 2014) or have a polarizing effect on students in combination with frequently seen low achievement goals (Kikuchi et al., 2015).

While research has examined Japanese students' inward-looking nature from several angles, from the perspective of language learning, this study chose to examine international posture (IP). It has relatively widespread and continued use and has clear connections to English education (Botes et al., 2020), making it of particular relevance to topics in the English classroom. A motivational factor in the study of English as a foreign language, International posture can be traced back to "integrativeness" which is a factor by which students of a foreign language are motivated by a desire to integrate into the native community of the language which they are learning (Gardner, 1985). However, as English has developed increasingly as a lingua franca, the established concept of integrativeness has become harder to apply. There is no longer a singular community of native speakers, and the speakers of English as a second

language now greatly outnumber native speakers. Thus, without a goal community in which to integrate, learners of English as a second language are now asked to imagine the international community in which they hope to be a participant (Yashima, 2002).

The measurement of IP has developed since it was first proposed. The original scale was composed of four indicators a) intercultural friendship orientation, b) interest in foreign affairs c) intercultural-approach-avoidance tendency, and d) interest in international occupation or activities (Yashima, 2002). The scale for intercultural friendship orientation was removed in streamlining the survey and removing overlaps (Yashima et al., 2004). In subsequent research, the scale was further modified resulting in the current version composed of the two attitudinal-behavioral propensities: a) intercultural approach tendency, b) interest in international occupation or activities, and the two knowledge orientations: a) interest in international news and b) having things to communicate to the world (Yashima, 2009). Although the "having things to communicate" subscale has been questioned (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020), the general construct has been used frequently, and in a systematic literature review, was found to a be a valid hypothesis with a verified effect on learning motivation (Botes et al., 2020). Some research has also suggested that it may be malleable, through experiences such as study abroad (Geoghegan, 2018), which offers possibilities for increasing language motivation. While integrativeness continues to be used in research and is perceived to be a relevant factor in English learning motivation, there is also research showing that between integrativeness and international posture, the latter is a more significant source of motivation for university students engaged in learning English as a foreign language (Radosavljević Krsmanović, 2021).

Motivation and Interest in Language Learning

Motivation is an important aspect of learning. It plays a part in student engagement in activities and influences how much students will gain from those pursuits (Filgona et al., 2020). In the specific context of second-language learning, motivation has been shown to increase both willingness to communicate and communication frequency in the target language (Lao, 2020). When teachers employ motivational strategies successfully, both in-class and out-of-class behaviors are significantly influenced resulting in increased efforts to use self-learning materials, to decrease language errors, and to make use of new knowledge (Lee et al., 2020). As a complex concept, motivation has a wide range of effects on various aspects of learning, but it can be viewed overall as a boon to the learning process.

International posture has been shown as a factor that strengthens learning motivation and willingness to communicate, as well as improving communication in English (Yashima, 2019). A strong relation was found between IP and the ideal L2 self, another significant aspect of L2 motivation (Véliz-Campos et al., 2020). It has also been found to positively influence the L2 experience and negatively affect the ought-to L2 self, which represents obligational motivation that negatively affected the language learning experience (Zhao et al., 2022). As it continues to be used in countries throughout the world, understanding about its positive effects continues to develop.

Interest, another factor studied in relation to motivation, is considered an antecedent to motivation, and the deepened engagement that this motivation leads to can then both strengthen and extend interest (Sang & Hiver, 2021). It is commonly conceptualized as having two different parts. First, there is situational interest, which is a more immediate reaction to structural features, such as humor, or learning conditions, and second there is individual interest, which is more developed and enduring (Renninger & Hidi, 2017). In compulsory English courses in Japan, individual interest has been shown to positively affect both self-efficacy and competence (Fryer & Ainley, 2019). In a more specific example, Asgari et al. (2019) showed that employing reading materials tailored to match student interests resulted in significant improvements in reading comprehension across skill levels, with interested learners tending to be more diligent and hardworking. In a broader sense, Sang and Hiver (2021) point out similarities between the effects of interest and that of integrativeness, noting that they both can relate to attitudes toward the foreign community that allows use of English. However, considering the expansion of the discourse regarding English language learning, this comparison should not stop at integrativeness, but the similarities to International Posture should also be considered.

While the study of IP has focused on its role in motivating English language learners, its resemblances to other motivating factors like interest suggest that it should be explored more widely. How might it affect students' global citizenship practices, or interest in specific international topics? Because research has been inclined to focus on a more narrow range of areas directly related to language education, this study chose to examine the effect that IP could have on the relevant topic interest in SDGs.

Given the importance of interest, motivation, and creating a curriculum that moves beyond solely grammar-based teaching, this study sought to identify which SDGs could be best adopted as topics within an English classroom. Specifically, it asked:

1. How do demographic factors influence interest in learning about different SDGs as topics in English class?
2. Does International Posture impact students' level of interest in studying about SDGs in English class?
3. Which goals are more highly affected by International Posture, and thus more likely to motivate students to learn English?

Methods

Surveys were conducted at a national comprehensive university in Western Japan. Students were first-year undergraduate students who were attending English language classes as a part of their general or core education classes. Because English is compulsory in the first year, this choice of population provided a broader understanding of the general student population, and not only students who already showed significant interest in taking English as an elective. The purpose of the study and its voluntary nature was made clear to students. Students were assured that their participation, or lack thereof, would have no effect on their grades in the course. Both

the survey and the informed consent forms provided to the students were approved by the university's research ethics committee.

Surveys were completed through the university's online system. Surveys consisted of a collection of questions in Japanese to determine the IP of students as well as their interest in studying each of the individual SDGs in English classes, and basic demographic information. For international posture, Yashima's three well confirmed subscales were used: "Intergroup Approach Tendency (IAT)" (7 items), "Interest in International Vocation or Activities (IIV)" (6 items), and "Interest in International News (IIN)" (4 items) (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020; Yashima, 2009). A pilot survey with different students in the first semester did not validate the "Having things to communicate" subscale, and so, it was not included, to reduce burden on the survey takers. Answers were on a 6-point Likert-type scale following the example of recent researchers who used this type of scale (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020).

In addition, six questions were asked for each of the goals. Three questions were used to discover interest regarding using the SDG as a topic within English class, "Topic Interest." Three questions were used to determine the perceived value of the goal in students' career and life, "Personal Value." Questions for Topic Interest were adapted from the Academic Interest Scale's emotional interest subscale, addressing the emotional component of interest (Luo et al., 2019). Questions for Personal Value were adapted from the same Academic Interest Scale's value subscale, which measures the perceived significance that a topic will have in the students' lives, addressing the value-related component of interest (Luo et al., 2019). Answers for the interest and personal value questions used the original scale's 5-point Likert scale. Results were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 28.0 (IBM, Armonk, New York, USA). Finally, students who indicated why they were interested in studying an SDG in English class were asked to select the main reason for their interest from a list of options. They were also able to input their own reason if they felt that the listed reasons were not applicable.

Results and Analysis

Using the survey data, students' IP and their Topic Interest and Personal Value for each goal were analyzed. The analysis also examined differences in gender and the department in which students were enrolled.

Demographics

Two hundred sixty-six first year university students responded to parts of the survey. Of the students studied, the gender distribution was approximately even (141 male, 125 female). When Japanese students enter university, they enter not into the university as a whole, but rather join a specific school, or department, which later allows them to choose from a variety of different majors. The respondents were enrolled in seven different departments, with engineering and humanities being the most common, at 21.1% and 18.8% respectively. Two classes each were science, economics, and medicine department students, and one class each

was agriculture and education. The departments of veterinary medicine and global and science studies were not surveyed due to their lack of participation in the standard general education English courses.

Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis with Promax rotation was conducted for the questions pertaining to International Posture. Individual questions were coded by their subscale name, Intergroup Approach Tendency (IAT), Interest in International Vocation or Activities (IIV), and Interest in International News (IIN) followed by an item number. Analysis of the scree plot suggested three factors in the final analysis, which was further confirmed using a guideline of eigenvalues > 1. With over 200 responses, items with a factor loading of less than .40, were considered to be not significant and discarded (Field, 2017). In addition, factors with less than two items were considered ill-defined and removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The first analysis yielded four factors, and IIV1 was removed due to its low loading, this left factor 4 with only two items, so IAT6, and IIV5 were also removed. When analysis was repeated, it yielded the expected three factors (Table 2). The IIV subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .87), the IAT subscale consisted of 6 items (α = .75), and the IIN subscale consisted of 4 items (α = .76). Factor scores for each subscale were then calculated using the regression predictor to account for the differing weights (Schreiber, 2021).

Table 2
Factor Analysis

	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**
Item (no.)	IIV	IAT	IIN
IIV (2)	.93		
IIV (4)	.88		
IIV (6)*	.69		
IIV (3)	.47		
IAT (7)		.76	
IAT (3)		.70	
IAT (5)		.52	
IAT (1)		.50	
IAT (2)*		.46	
IAT (4)		.44	
IIN (1)			.88
IIN (4)*			.70
IIN (3)			.50
IIN (2)			.47

Note: * indicates reverse scored (negatively worded) items

T-tests showed that while there was not a significant difference in IIV or IIN between genders, there was a significant difference for IAT, with the average score for females (M = 0.15, SD =

0.9) being higher than that of males (M = -0.13, SD = 0.9), t = -2.48, p =.014. There were also significant differences in IAT based on students' area of study. A one-way ANOVA showed that there were also differences in each IP subscale score based on department for IIV (F(6, 258) = 3.82, p = .001.), IAT (F(6, 258) = 3.56, p = .002), and IIN (F(6, 258) = 2.19, p = .04). Specifically, for IIV, Tukey's post-hoc showed that students in the department of medicine (M = 0.6, SD = 0.9) had a significantly higher score than students in the departments of engineering (M = -0.2, SD = 0.9), humanities (M = -0.2, SD = 1), and agriculture (M = -0.3, SD = 0.6). For IAT, students in the department of medicine (M = 0.5, SD = 1) had a significantly higher score than students in the departments of engineering (M = -0.3, SD = 0.8), and humanities (M = -0.2, SD = 0.9). Tukey's post-hoc did not show significant pairwise results for IIN.

Exploratory Factor Analysis was also conducted for the questions regarding Topic Interest and Personal Value. For all goals, the same two factors were found. Topic Interest and Personal Value. Factors for all goals showed acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha values of over α = .70, with the majority showing good reliability of α = .80. Loading factors for individual questions varied somewhat from goal to goal but were all above the 0.40 cut-off for significance. Factor scores were calculated using the regression predictor to ensure that the differing items weights were accounted for (Schreiber, 2021).

For the first research question, which was the effects of demographics, T-tests showed that there were significant differences between genders for Topic Interest for some goals. Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 16 showed significant differences, and for each of them, the interest was higher for female students. The biggest difference was seen for goal 5: Gender Equality. However, a one-way ANOVA did not show significant differences in interest for any of the goals across departments. Personal Value showed significant differences for goals 5, 7, 9, 10, 14 and 15. Female students scored higher for goal 5, 10, and male students for goals 7, 9, 14, and 15.

For research question 2, whether International Posture impacts students' level of interest in studying about SDGs in English class, multiple regression analysis was repeated with Topic Interest for each goal as the dependent variable and IIV, IAT, IIN, and Personal Value as independent variables. Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis for IAT and Personal Value for each goal. Neither IIV nor IIN were significant for any of the goals. Non-significant variables were not included in the table for brevity. IAT had a significant and positive effect for 14 of the goals, and Personal Value had a significant and positive effect for all goals except for goal 12. This showed that not all subscales of International Posture played a role in determining students' topic interest, but the subscale IAT affected topic interest in most of the goals.

Table 3

Significant Regression Analysis Coefficients for Each Goal

SDG	R^2	Variable	β	T	p
Goal 1:	.24	IAT	0.33	3.41	<.001
		Personal Value	0.32	5.21	<.001
Goal 2:	.18	IAT	0.36	3.61	<.001
		Personal Value	0.25	3.84	<.001
Goal 3:	.20	IAT	0.34	3.47	<.001
		Personal Value	0.26	4.04	<.001
Goal 4:	.17	IAT	0.31	3.09	.002
		Personal Value	0.28	4.38	<.001
Goal 5:	.20	IAT	0.29	2.88	.004
		Personal Value	0.30	4.60	<.001
Goal 6:	.11	IAT	0.30	2.85	.01
		Personal Value	0.18	2.59	.01
Goal 7:	.16	IAT	0.36	3.57	<.001
		Personal Value	0.23	3.46	<.001
Goal 8:	.15	Personal Value	0.23	3.52	<.001
Goal 9:	.11	IAT	0.31	3.02	.003
		Personal Value	0.21	3.08	.002
Goal 10:	.14	IAT	0.31	2.96	.003
		Personal Value	0.21	3.01	.003
Goal 11:	.15	IAT	0.34	3.25	.001
		Personal Value	0.18	2.66	.01
Goal 13:	.10	Personal Value	0.19	2.76	.01
Goal 14:	.14	IAT	0.27	2.66	.01
		Personal Value	0.25	3.74	<.001
Goal 15:	.14	IAT	0.24	2.33	.02
		Personal Value	0.26	3.80	<.001
Goal 16:	.18	IAT	0.22	2.18	.03
		Personal Value	0.27	4.10	<.001
Goal 17:	.22	IAT	0.24	2.45	.02
		Personal Value	0.36	5.75	<.001

For question 3, regarding which goals were more highly affected by International Posture, both the R^2 value and the β value were examined. The R^2 value showed that the independent variables explained the highest percent of variance in Topic Interest for goals 1, 17, 3 and 5, whereas for goals 13, 6 and 9, up to 50% less of the variance was explained. The β values were also examined to compare the effects of IAT and Personal Value for each goal. When IAT was significant, the standardized beta ranged from 0.22 to 0.36, and when Personal Value was

significant, it ranged from 0.18 to 0.36. For many goals, the standardized beta was similar for both IAT and Personal Value, although there were some goals where the β value for IAT was notably higher (Goals 6, 7, 11), and one case where Personal was notably higher (Goal 17).

Students who indicated that they desired to study a goal in English class were asked to select a reason for their feelings. There were six reasons provided: 1) usefulness in future work, 2) desire to research the topic in English, 3) wanting to study global topics in English class, 4) wanting to converse fluently about international topics, 5) personal interest in the goal, and 6) awareness that it must be achieved internationally (global nature). Students also had the option to select "other" and give further explanation. The valid percent for each answer is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Reasons for Desire to Study Each Goal within English Class

	Work	Self-Study	Int. Study Topic	Conver-sation	Personal Interest	Global Nature	Other	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Goal 1	4.5	3.8	**39.1**	36.1	9.0	6.0	1.5	100
Goal 2	2.8	9.2	**35.8**	34.9	7.3	9.2	0.9	100
Goal 3	16.7	3.9	26.5	**33.3**	15.7	2.9	1	100
Goal 4	10.3	2.6	23.3	22.4	**35.3**	5.2	0.9	100
Goal 5	4.9	6.6	18.9	26.2	**36.9**	2.5	4.1	100
Goal 6	6.9	8.9	24.8	**32.7**	8.9	16.8	1	100
Goal 7	5.4	10.7	21.4	**33**	23.2	3.6	2.7	100
Goal 8	9.5	7.4	10.5	33.7	**34.7**	4.2	0	100
Goal 9	16.8	6.3	15.8	**31.6**	20	7.4	2.1	100
Goal 10	5.2	5.2	27.4	**32.6**	20.7	8.1	0.7	100
Goal 11	8.2	9.6	16.4	27.4	**28.8**	8.2	1.4	100
Goal 12	8.4	15.7	19.3	20.5	**31.3**	4.8	0	100
Goal 13	2.8	5.6	27.8	**35.2**	24.1	4.6	0	100
Goal 14	2.1	7.4	17.9	**38.9**	30.5	3.2	0	100
Goal 15	3.5	11.6	25.6	**30.2**	25.6	3.5	0	100
Goal 16	7.6	5.9	17.8	**36.4**	25.4	5.1	1.7	100
Goal 17	7.4	8.5	**26.6**	**26.6**	24.5	6.4	0	100

*The most selected answer for each goal is shown in bold

Of students who indicated why they wanted to study a goal, few selected the reasons: relation to job, desire to be able to research about it on their own, or the need for the goal to be achieved internationally. Instead, many students who had a desire to study each goal indicated that they wanted to use internationally related topics for English class, that they wanted to be able to talk fluently about international topics, or that they were personally interested in the topic. On

average, across all the goals, a desire to be able to talk about the subject, was the most commonly selected reason (31%), followed by wanting to use international topics in English class (23%) and personal interest (23%). Two of the top responses supported the significance of the IAT subscale in determining interest, considering the connections between the overall IP scale and increased communication, and the specific reference of the IAT subscale in evaluating students' desire to interact with different groups of people. Students who chose to provide their own answer frequently combined aspects of two of the available answers, such as "It is an international problem, and I think that there are a lot of materials available in English," so there did not appear to be a lack of choices.

Discussion and Recommendations

From these results, it was clear that demographics can affect aspects of IP. Although there was not a significant difference between genders for IIV or IIN, there was a significant difference for IAT. This supported the IP scale's, or at least the IAT subscale's similarity to integrativeness, considering that Mori and Gobel (2006), in a notably comprehensive study of motivating factors for Japanese EFL students, found that integrativeness was the only statistically significant difference in language motivation between genders.

For the first research question, demographics had some but limited influence on interest in learning about SDGs. Similar to the results for IP, though not all goals had significant differences for gender, when there was a significant difference between goals, female students consistently showed higher interest. The goals showing a significant difference were related to people's well-being, such as zero hunger, gender equality, and peace, suggesting a greater importance of human connection. However, students' majors or areas of study did not significantly affect interest in the goals, suggesting that they c be used to motivate regardless of students' area of study.

For the second research question, IAT was found to have an effect on Topic Interest for a majority of the goals. However, goals 8 (decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible consumption and production), and 13 (climate action), were not significantly affected. The lack of any significant effect on goal 8, likely stemmed from the focus on work, considering that IIV was not a significant factor for any of the goals, and few students gave future career as a reason for their desire to study a goal in English. Goal 12 is generally enacted on a personal level, and thus likely did not have the same international image as the other goals. Of all the goals, it had the highest percentage of students whose desire to study it stemmed from the wish to research it on their own, which similarly suggested that it was a more personal goal. Finally Goal 13 was not affected, in contrast to the similarly environment-themed goals 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land). This may be attributed to its comparatively broad framing, which could make it more difficult to discuss.

For the third research question, there was a moderate degree of variation among the standardized beta values and the percent of variance explained by each model. Considering both factors, primarily the people related goals should be strongly considered as topics for

English classes, such as goals 1, 2, 3 and 5, with goal 1 as a particularly good candidate. In addition to the connection to IP, these SDGs are also topics that are in many ways easier to address with the language abilities that are available in an EFL classroom. On the other hand, because the differences between most of the goals were moderate, it is easier to suggest the goals that are less appropriate, namely goals 14 and 15, and the goals that were found to be insignificantly affected by IAT above for research question 2. Finally, considering that IP has a moderate effect for most of the goals, adapting the class to meet potential student interests related to work, or department and field of study should also be contemplated.

Considering the educational system of Japan, it is recommended that SDGs be implemented as topics for English classes in university programs where there is more freedom of curriculum. Primary and secondary education curricula remain limited by state approved textbooks and the driving need to prepare students for college entrance exams, although incorporation of SDGs into the English class at those levels is still suggested when possible.

It is also suggested that teachers do not shy away from including SDGs as a topic out of concern of lack of knowledge or still-undeveloped interest. Even with Japan's limited curriculum, for example, Imanishi (2020) found that while the terms SDGs may not be explicitly stated, that not only does "environment" appear as a topic in most junior high school textbooks in a rural prefecture of Japan, the use of environment as a topic increased student engagement in writing activities. Furthermore, a survey of Japanese university students showed at least 73.7% were aware of the term, and the most common reason for their knowledge was learning in class (Ando et al., 2019). If a majority of students are first learning about the existence of SDGs in classes, a portion of the students who already show interest in learning about the them, were likely first introduced to them in their school classes. Therefore, use as a topic in English class may be the first step in the cycle of exposure and potential for interest development. It should also be noted that students' reported knowledge and awareness does not necessarily equate to actual knowledge and awareness levels. In fact, it was shown by Oltra-Badenes et al. (2023) that students' actual knowledge surrounding SDGs was higher than they reported, likely due in part to previously learning about the themes of goals without explicit reference to the terminology. Therefore, it is suggested that incorporating SDGs as a topic may serve as an effective precursor to knowledge and interest.

Finally, the use of SDGs as a topic for improving motivation in English language education should also be considered outside of Japan. They are a global topic, and international research shows that at the university level, there is interest in, if not knowledge of, the goals in a variety of countries throughout (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020; Novieastari et al., 2022; Smaniotto et al., 2020; The national treasury and planning state department for planning, 2019). Moreover, recent surveys indicate that knowledge of the SDGs is increasing and is particularly high amongst the under-30 population (GlobeScan, 2023). This again suggests that young people are taking a greater interest in the SDGs and could serve as a motivating factor for language learners internationally. It is proposed to utilize the topic of SDGs not only at the university level, but also in the education leading up to it.

Conclusion

Interest plays an important role in second language learning. This study investigated student interest in SDGs at a Japanese university in order to answer the following questions: Do gender and department affect interest in studying SDGs? How and to what degree does IP affect interest in learning SDGs? Findings showed that gender influenced students' IP and interest, and IP that had an effect on interest in most of the goals.

International Posture is a recognized factor in increasing motivation for English learning, and based on this study's findings, is also a factor in increasing interest in learning about many of the SDGs in an English-speaking environment. Considering its contribution to both of these factors, attempting to incorporate SDGs into English curricula can not only lead to selection of topics that cater to motivated English learners, but it also coincides with one of Japan's major goals for educating globally minded students. Therefore, it should be considered as a multi-pronged approach to further Japan's goals for the internationalization of higher education. However, it is important to be aware of the potential differences between students, particularly based on gender. In the spirit of goals 4 and 5, Quality Education, and Gender Equality, teachers should also be aware of the needs of male students and consider options to increase their engagement and sense of international community gained from the subject matter.

There are several limitations to this study. First, while the focus on students in first year general education courses allowed a broader view into multiple departments, it did not address the perspectives of more advanced or specialized students. Although many first-year students are not yet sure of what their future holds, students who continue to develop more specialized majors may wish to focus more directly on an English language community that they are more likely to encounter in their own future. Second, although the theoretical connection between IP and interest was confirmed, practical applications in the classroom still need to be addressed, such as finding appropriate ways to integrate the complex topics raised by SDGs in a level-appropriate manner. Third, students completed the survey without a detailed explanation of the individual goals. Although student responses to a pilot survey indicated that the large majority of students consider themselves moderately knowledgeable about SDGs, it is possible that responses for the less commonly discussed goals were affected by lack of knowledge. Finally, although the integration of SDGs could be effective for motivating classes that have higher IP, it may be less effective in classes that have low IP in the first place. If, however, IP is malleable, then efforts to improve the IP of a class could have particularly positive effects in both interest and motivation. Considering this fact, future studies could examine the potential for change in IP and whether classroom-based internationally oriented experiences such as SDG study can contribute to its change.

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