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Journal Policy

Found in 2023, BRU ELT Journal is a peer-reviewed and open-access electronic journal with the main aim to publish fully refereed high-quality original research articles in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) around the world for the benefit of English language teachers and researchers. The journal welcomes articles from local and foreign academics, researchers, graduate students, and policymakers. All articles are required to be in English.

The Thai Journal Citation Index Center (TCI) requested cooperation from journal editors in the selection of a specific journal's sub-areas stored in the TCI database. As a result, each journal is permitted to select 1-5 sub-areas for the papers published in the journal. In this regard, the "BRU ELT JOURNAL" would like to declare that beginning with the 1st Volume, 1st Issue (January-April 2023), articles covering the main subject area, Social Sciences, will be accepted for publication. Furthermore, these articles must be pertinent to the subject areas of Arts and Humanities, and they must cover these two sub-subject areas: 1) Language and Linguistics, and 2) Literature and Literary Theory.

BRU ELT Journal accepts articles relevant to the following themes: English as an International Language, World Englishes (WE), Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language (ESL), as an Additional Language (EAL) or as a Foreign Language (TEFL), ESP and EAP, Applied Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics, Approaches and Methods in English Education, Culture and Literature in English Education, English Language Curriculum and Teaching Materials, Language Learning and Acquisition, Language Testing and Evaluation, Life-long Language Learning, Multimedia and ICT in ELT, Teacher Training and Education, Interpretation and Translation Studies, and Discourse and Interlanguage Pragmatics.

The journal is published three times a year: January-April, May-August, and September-December. However, BRU ELT JOURNAL, with no more than two (2) issues per year, might be published as a special issue upon joining in the special academic events of national and international conferences held both in Thailand and other countries.

All articles in this journal must be reviewed by at least three (3) external peer reviewers in the relevant fields from different institutes. More importantly, the authors' and reviewers' identities are concealed from each other (Double-blind peer review) in order to have the articles with high quality and academic standards. The articles submitted for publication in this journal have not already been published *elsewhere* or are not under consideration by peer reviewers for publication in other journals. The authors must strictly comply with the reference system and the criteria for the publication of academic or research articles set by the journal.

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Strategies Employed by Successful Non-English Majors in Enhancing Their Speaking Proficiency: Experiences of Students at Seiyun High Model School

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Abstract

The researcher observed that some English-major undergraduates cannot speak English fluently and accurately. Yet, some non-English major students, even at the secondary education level, can acquire a good competence in English. The current study takes place at Hadhramout (the valley), which is one of the governorates of Yemen, an Arab country. This study hence aims to identify the strategies leading to the success of non-English majors in acquiring proficiency in speaking English as a foreign language, reflecting the experiences of Seiyun High Model School students. The study sample includes 11 non-English major students who are members of the English Club of Seiyun High Model School. Selection of the participants is done based on their level of proficiency in speaking English. The data are collected via focus group interview, and content analysis is used as a method for data analysis. The study reveals that non-English majors, based on the opinions of the students of Seiyun High Model School, adopt several successful strategies enabling them to achieve proficiency in spoken English. These strategies include highlighting the role of listening exposure, consistent practice, motivation, effective learning techniques, and confidence-building. The study also revealed that grammar is important in casual speech, yet it is important in formal settings, and that traditional education often focuses on grammar at the expense of aural and oral communication.

Keywords: speaking proficiency, strategies, non-English majors, successful English speakers, English as a foreign language (EFL)

Introduction

In this section, the significance of the research problem is identified. The relevant literature is reviewed. Additionally, the overall benefits derived from the research findings are also outlined.

Significance of the research problem

This study aims to find out strategies that help non-English majors in EFL contexts to speak English fluently. Recently, the researcher has noticed that a number of non-English majors, namely, Seiyun High Model School students, speak English more proficiently than some English majors. The researcher observed that some English major undergraduates do not have the ability to speak English fluently and accurately,

yet some other students of lower educational levels, even in secondary education, though a rare case, are able to acquire good competence in English even though it is not their major. This unexpected phenomenon prompted an investigation into the strategies that led to their success.

It seems that this problem occurs in other EFL contexts. For instance, in Indonesia, the English major students at the university in South Sumatra encountered problems with speaking performance; more than half of the participants did not do well in a speaking test (Jaya, Petrus & Pitaloka, 2022). Practically, a significant number of BA English majors at the English departments of Seiyun University based in Hadhramout, Yemen, fail to speak English in comparison to some non-English major learners. This idea is established by Ali and Tevfik (2020), who reported that a limited number of foreign language learners can communicate well in English and perceive themselves as competent speakers. Hence, the current study tries to investigate why some non-English major learners were able to successfully speak English and uncover the secrets behind their achievement.

The researcher, as a lecturer in the departments of English at Seiyun University, Yemen, has observed insufficient practice opportunities in these departments due to the unavailability of friendly and high motivational conditions. Speaking skills as a course are only taught twice in the whole English Language Program. The remaining courses of the program are more knowledge-driven than skill-related courses. Yemen is a monolingual country in which almost all Yemeni people speak only Arabic, yet English is studied at schools as a foreign language. Most students at Yemeni schools study English reluctantly as they see no immediate benefit from learning it. In Yemen, speaking skills in schools are either neglected or traditionally taught in a way that does not encourage students to produce the language. For example, teachers change speaking lessons into reading lessons by asking students to read the conversation from the textbook; this activity is more of reading practice than speaking practice. Despite these limitations, non-English majors appear to find alternative pathways to develop their English-speaking skills, which this study aims to uncover.

Failing to master speaking skills is an issue that appears to be prevalent among some English majors in many EFL contexts. Syahfutra, Wibowo, Ardiya and Febtiningsih (2019) have demonstrated that Indonesian students in the English Department struggled with their speaking skills due to shyness, limited vocabulary, and the learning environment. Therefore, the students highlighted the importance of implementing more effective language acquisition strategies to enhance speech proficiency. Accordingly, the present study may suggest some effective strategies for students who wish to improve their speaking skills by themselves.

The idea of studying this topic came after the researcher met by chance three Yemeni people from Hadhramout Governorate with good English-speaking fluency, yet they did not major in English, namely a taxi driver, an airport worker, and an oil company worker. The taxi driver, who is a secondary school graduate, asserted that he acquired English from tourists who frequently visited hotels in Seiyun City, Yemen. He expressed his surprise that his brother, who is an English major, is much weaker in English due to his refusal to practice the language. The strategy that the taxi driver used is supported by Umar and Suparman (2018), who confirmed that tourism has a significant contribution to enhancing English-speaking motivation. The Yemeni airport worker, on the other hand, has the chance to travel to different countries for business,

like China. This opportunity worked as an incentive for him to improve his speaking skills. Here the nature of his occupation drives him to become a good speaker. The oil company worker confirmed that his job by nature requires him to communicate with English-speaking people. Based on these three situations, the researcher concludes that it doesn't require a learner to be specialized in English to improve their English-speaking performance and that there are strategies that EFL learners employ to learn and improve their English-speaking skills.

It seems that when teachers of English try to restrict speaking practice only in classrooms, students struggle to speak it well. As proven by Nazara (2011), the time for practicing speaking in classes is not sufficient to help students develop their English-speaking skills. In their study on demotivating factors in speaking skills, Heidari and Riahipour (2012) asserted that both students and teachers identified the classroom as one of the most discouraging factors. Hindrances for students to speak English in classrooms, according to Juhana (2023), are attributed to various psychological factors such as fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. These factors develop due to the students' fear of being laughed at by their classmates and friends. Furthermore, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) and Littlewood (2007) indicated that a language classroom can inhibit students. In other words, when students try to speak English in the classroom, they feel anxious about making mistakes and fearful of their classmates' criticism. It is recommended by Nazara (ibid) that the classroom environment should be friendly and encouraging as one of the solutions for overcoming classroom hindrances. Issues such as classroom environment, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and motivation, as proved above, are some of the factors that discourage learners from speaking English. However, the current study, which investigates the factors that assist learners in speaking English successfully, may prove that successful English speakers do not experience any of the aforementioned discouraging factors.

In EFL contexts, most of the studies that have been done on speaking skills targeted English majors; researchers could hardly investigate the speaking skills of non-English majors. The current study chooses the latter as a research topic, considering that speaking is a skill that does not need a specialized person to be able to master. The observation and reality may prove that many of the EFL proficient speakers did not study English formally, but they were able to acquire it. They have simply picked up while fulfilling non-linguistic tasks wherein English is required to achieve that task successfully.

Many previous studies focused on the demotivational factors of learning or speaking English as a foreign language (Ali & Pathan, 2017; Ghadirzadeh, Hashtroudi & Shokri, 2012; Meshkat & Ebrahimi, 2019; Pratiwi, 2019; Unal & Yelken, 2016). In their study, Tuyen and Phuong (2021) identified the factors that cause reticence in the English-speaking performance of non-English major students. The occurrence of such factors in EFL contexts is something obvious because most EFL students, especially non-English majors, feel no direct need for learning or speaking English as none around them speak it. The current study looks at the bright side of the matter, which is the motivational factors and strategies that help non-English majors to speak English successfully. Therefore, rather than lamenting the challenges of EFL contexts, this study aims to explore the successful experiences of proficient non-English majors. The findings could be applied in practical settings, such as in educational programs or self-directed learning strategies for EFL learners. That is because non-English major

learners probably improve their English-speaking proficiency away from the classroom using self-directed strategies that fit their preferences.

Literature Review

This section offers a comprehensive exploration of the strategies used for the development of speaking skills among EFL non-English majors.

Strategies for the development of speaking skills

Ali and Tevfik (2020) investigate the strategies that help people become fluent English speakers. The results showed that strategies like personal practice, teacher quality, living abroad, cultural context, and using technology outside of class are important for improving English speaking skills. Some of the strategies or factors contributing to students' gain of English proficiency, as concluded by Phuong and Tran (2019), included students' learning autonomy, motivation, attitude, and strategies. Dincer and Darıyemez (2020) provided two types of strategies for speaking enhancement: 1) contextual strategies, including self-practice, teacher factor, experience abroad, context, and out-of-class technology use, and 2) affective strategies, including motivation and anxiety. More details about these factors or strategies are presented in the following sections.

Among these strategies or factors, motivation and psychological influences play a particularly pivotal role in the success of speaking English and other language skills. According to Ahsan, Asgher and Hussain (2020), shyness and lack of confidence tend to diminish as speaking ability improves, and vice versa. Anxiety in English speaking stemmed from a lack of confidence and nervousness. Anxiety, often fueled by a lack of confidence, significantly impedes EFL learners' ability to speak fluently. Speaking anxiety, for instance, has a significant influence on someone's ability to speak a foreign language (Noerila & Puspitaloka, 2022). Students with more confidence and more self-esteem make better improvements in speaking the language, while learners who are self-conscious score not much progress. Wahyuni (2022) confirmed that psychological aspects such as motivation have a developmental impact on EFL learners' speaking skills. Al-Mahrooqi (2012) revealed that lacking motivation in English learning is among the major factors leading to students' low English language proficiency.

Several other strategies are applied by successful EFL learners to improve their ability to speak English, including watching movies using English subtitles, app learning, playing conversations while watching movies, self-talk, learning community, and practicing with others by voice chatting on WhatsApp (Mbani, Komaruddin, Mashuri & Rofiqoh, 2023). As presented before, Syahfutra et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of implementing more effective strategies to enhance speech proficiency. Every learner could have his ways or strategies to improve their speech and language in general. Whatever strategy for speaking a language a person adopts; it will be fruitful and lead to progress.

The influence of extracurricular activities, such as English clubs and online resources, on the speaking proficiency of a language cannot be ignored. The establishment of English clubs provides a good opportunity to create a productive environment for the development of students' speaking skills. Students, as revealed by Hamad (2013), strongly recommended the activation of English clubs within colleges.

They have realized that restricting English practice to the classroom may demotivate them from speaking it.

Opportunities should be created for learners to develop their speaking skills beyond school and classrooms. One opportunity is the correct use of technology available at the hands of the students. Proper utilization of technology could provide students with diverse opportunities to enhance their speaking skills in a low-anxiety environment. Dincer and Darıyemez (2020) suggested that language acquisition should extend beyond the classroom boundaries with an emphasis on technology-enhanced extracurricular exercises in EFL contexts. Living in the era of smart technology and artificial intelligence is a privilege for learners to improve themselves independently, away from the classroom.

It is assumed that learners who engage themselves in doing activities they like or feel they need, such as watching TV shows or doing a particular job, and these activities have English as an essential element to achieve them properly, would be able to unconsciously pick up English. In a YouTube video, Krashen (2017) gave an example of a kid called Paul who acquired a new language only by watching one of his favorite TV cartoons, and that kid, while watching the TV cartoon, had no intention of acquiring the language. What he was concerned about was enjoying the events of the cartoons. On the other hand, the students who try to speak English consciously in the classroom, even if they have practiced it orally with their teachers or classmates, will not be able to speak it naturally.

Teachers' role in motivating English language learners

Teachers should assist students in enhancing their English-speaking skills. Similarly, Juhana (2023) highlighted the need for teachers to motivate students towards the same goal. What students want from their teachers is motivation, guidance, and encouragement. EFL learners would probably prefer a stress-free environment where the teachers' authority is absent. Teachers' role in motivating students could help them overcome psychological barriers and communicate fearlessly in English (Juhana 2023). However, when motivation comes from the students themselves, they progress more quickly. When students feel the necessity to speak English and understand its importance in real life, they will begin to work on this skill. Therefore, the real role of teachers is to raise awareness among students and allow motivation to develop intrinsically within the students themselves. This ultimately leads to the understanding that speaking English is not just a classroom activity plagued with challenges, but rather a daily habit for expressing one's needs in life.

Objective

This study tries to identify the strategies that successful non-English majors use to develop their speaking proficiency in English as a foreign language.

Methodology

Sample

Purposive sampling is used in the current study. In purposive sampling, the participants are selected "on purpose" because they have characteristics that better match the objective(s) of the research (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters & Walker, 2020). The sample of the present study is chosen subjectively because the nature of this study requires the selection of successful English speakers. The sample includes 10 non-English major students selected purposively from the Seiyun Model Secondary School for Boys, and they are all Yemeni and belong to an English club organized by their school. The English club activities are actively organized on Tuesdays for one hour, during which students are given the chance to freely practice English among themselves. Some of the activities are organized in the form of visits to organizations that use English as a language of communication, such as the English departments in the colleges. For some activities, native speakers of English are invited to the English club to give the English club members a space to hear natural English and practice it with the natives.

The students of Seiyun High Model School were selected because they can speak English fluently. The researcher frequently observes them speaking English, as their English club usually arranges visits to our English department so that they can communicate in English with the professors as well as the students. The researcher and many others have been surprised by their excellent speaking competence. All target groups are successful English speakers, and they at least reach Level B2 (Upper Intermediate) of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The participant as "B2 speakers can communicate with reasonable fluency and accuracy in a variety of social and professional contexts." British Council. (n.d.). This level is used here as an indication of success in speaking skills, taking into consideration the EFL context where the learners learn or acquire English with no direct interaction with the native speakers of English or English-speaking communities.

Research instrument: Focus group interview

According to Lederman (1990), this technique involves the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population" (p. 117). Focus group interviews are used as a method for collecting the qualitative data of the study. Focus groups typically involve 8 to 12 people and are used to gather insights about group dynamics and shared opinions on a particular topic (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). 11 students are interviewed through a focus group session to collect the research data.

Data collection procedures

The focus group interview is held with the participants to share their experiences and talk about the strategies that enabled them to become good English speakers. Four questions are mainly asked during the focus group discussion to elicit answers from the participants: (1) How did you become a good English speaker? Or what did you do to improve your speaking abilities? (2) What techniques or strategies did you use to help you speak English? and (4) What motivates you to speak English?

The interview was a semi-structured interview where these four questions were not the only questions asked.

The focus group interview is conducted on Tuesday, 7 May 2024. The researcher is interested to know why and how the participants become proficient speakers of English, yet they are not specialized in English. According to the results of focus group interviews, multiple factors and strategies are unveiled by the participants (Table 1). The researcher has arranged a meeting with the English club members who are selected as a target group for the study. The focus group interview has been recorded and later transcribed to extract the strategies used and factors that contribute to English speaking improvement.

The focus group interview in this study is implemented based on Lederman's (1990) four elements: "(1) an introduction that provides the purpose, ground rules, and parameters; (2) an icebreaker or warm-up set of questions (3) a series of questions designed to elicit all the necessary information on the issues to be addressed; and (4) a summary or closing section (p. 122)."

Data analysis

Effective Strategies for EFL Non-English Majors to Improve Speaking

To achieve the objective of this study, which is about the strategies employed by students in acquiring proficiency in English speaking. The participants, who are non-English majors, are asked some related questions during the focus group interviews. The focus-group discussions are recorded and later transcribed to find out the key factors or strategies that non-English majors use to help them develop their communication abilities in English.

Data analysis of the focus group interviews with students at Seiyun High Model School revealed eight themes underlying the strategies that successful non-English majors employed to enhance their speaking proficiency. Direct quotes from participants are included to illustrate these themes. The results of the studies are supported by established theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and offer insights for pedagogical reform.

Table 1

Strategies Employed by Non-English Major Students to Enhance Their Speaking Proficiency

Categories	Strategies
Listening Exposure	- Listening to native speakers
	- Watching movies
	- Listening to songs and news
Practice	- Speaking with teachers
	- Practicing English daily
Motivation to Learn	- Learning English for:
	- Movies
	- exams (TOEFL)
	- career opportunities
	- global communication.

Table 1 *(Continued)*

Categories	Strategies
Thinking in English	- Translating thoughts into English
	- Internalizing English in daily life situations
Learning Techniques	- subtitles
	- online searches
	- apps (Duolingo)
	- structured course
Confidence	- overcoming shyness
	- gaining confidence
	- feeling more comfortable with native speakers.
Grammar in Speaking	- Mixed opinion
	- important for formal settings but not necessary for casual speaking.
Role of School Education	Schools focused too much on grammar and lacked speaking practice.

The above table presents various strategies or factors contributing to English speaking proficiency among non-English majors of the Seiyun High Model school placed under eight categories. We can categorize these factors into four main themes: listening exposure, practice, motivation to learn, thinking in English, learning techniques, confidence, grammar in speaking, and the role of school education.

Listening Exposure

Students highly valued the listening exposure factors, listening to native speakers, watching movies, and listening to songs, and news. This aligns with Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition occurs through exposure to comprehensible input. The high percentage of listening supports Ellis's (2005) assertion that input-based learning is crucial for second language acquisition.

All interviewees emphasized that the crucial contributing factor to their speaking performance is listening. One of them clarified this point by saying "I put headphones in my ears and listen to English reports or news even if I do not understand anything; I just listen." He further explained that "this way helped me a lot and improved my language very, very well." Krashen (2017) supported this idea by commenting that "when children start to speak, it is not the beginning of their language acquisition." The ability to speak comes after a long time of listening. To conclude, a great factor of success in speaking a language is to constantly listen intensively and extensively. Learners should listen to English media even if they do not understand English yet. Therefore, listening is one of the key factors that play a great role in improving speaking performance (Doff, 1998; Shumin, 1997), and it is considered to be the foundational skill for the effective acquisition of speaking proficiency (Eissa, 2019). Some participants stated that they listen more than they speak, but they emphasize the importance of both listening and speaking skills. This goes in line with Areta and Purwanti (2021), who revealed that listening ability can contribute to learners' speaking performance and that communication needs a combination of speaking and listening together.

Some highlighted the role of listening-first approaches, as stated by one of them, "Listening allows you to speak… you get the pronunciation right." Exposure to media, particularly films, was critical. One participant stated, "Movies are a big help." This finding goes in line with the Input Hypothesis. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis is reflected in participants' emphasis on listening to native media before speaking. This contrasts with primary schools' grammar-centric approach, which lacked communicative practice (Savignon, 2002). Seiyun Model Secondary School's success supports task-based learning models (Ellis, 2003), where authentic input and interaction drive proficiency.

All the Seiyun Model Secondary School students confirmed that watching movies and TV series is the way they develop their English-speaking ability. Enjoying English-language media and listening to native speakers represent forms of informal language exposure, which Krashen (1985) argues is crucial for language acquisition through his Input Hypothesis. These activities provide comprehensible input in authentic contexts, potentially leading to more natural language acquisition. However, one of the secondary school participants commented that some western movies contain indecent content and bad language, which contradicts the teachings of Islam. He suggested animated movies as a substitution for western movies, as the former has less harmful content. Watching movies worked as a motivation to improve English. We could conclude based on these answers that watching videos to understand and enjoy their content is one of the effective ways of improving speaking skills. Teachers can make use of this strategy by giving students tasks. For instance, they can ask them to watch videos of their choices and give them some activities related to these videos to do. Content-Based Instruction (CBI) as a teaching approach would be very helpful here in engaging learners in highly motivating content or subject matter (Anthony, 2018), such as history, math, culture, favorite footballers, movies, or any topic that the learners themselves select. The aim of CBI, as stated by Stryker and Leaver (1997), is to prepare autonomous learners who can continue the learning process outside the classroom.

Practice

Participants emphasized the importance of consistent practice and active engagement with teachers and peers. For example, one noted, "You have to speak every time with your teacher… Don't feel shy." Another emphasized regular speaking practice with teachers and peers, even when challenging, by saying, "Speak regularly with teachers and practice consistently, even if it's difficult."

Doing as much practice as possible and speaking with whoever you can is one of the solutions to speed up speaking English. As mentioned before, Dincer & Darıyemez (2020) proved that self-practice is one of the factors for speaking enhancement. This fact was confirmed by one student, who stated that he tries to always speak English with students and teachers of English in their school. Learners should start speaking and communicating with others in English as soon as possible. So, getting over the hump of speaking English even with errors is a big step towards success. A person with such courage must have several good qualities, such as fearlessness in speaking English, disregard for mistakes, motivation, etc. It could be stated here that lack of practice can delay students' progress in their speaking performance. Experience and observation prove that free practice of speaking skills, where students can speak English without looking at the textbook, is hardly practiced at Yemeni schools. The

same problem occurs in other Arab EFL contexts, such as Jordan, where poor speaking skills are a major issue for university students since they do not receive enough practice with the language (Khasawneh, 2023).

The fact that all the target groups of the current study are joining English clubs, where students come together solely to engage themselves in speaking activities, suggests the importance of language engagement and social interaction in language learning. Jambi (2022) proved that English Club in an Indonesian Islamic senior high school improved students' speaking skills, increasing vocabulary, self-confidence, and fluency while preparing them for debate and speech competitions. Additionally, involvement in the English Club, as found by Majaliwa, Kwizera, Mateso, Twahirwa, & Ujwiga (2024), accounts for the excellence in English speaking performance, highlighting its substantial impact on improving secondary school student's speaking abilities.

This aligns with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of interaction in facilitating language acquisition. The English club has allowed its members to have friends who share the same interest in improving and practicing their English-speaking skills. This supports the sociocultural theory of language learning proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development and language acquisition.

From this result, we can clearly understand that the availability of the environment for using English and direct interaction with friends in English is essential for enhancing speaking skills. English clubs are forms of environments created by secondary school peers with the help of their teachers, as they are not able to travel to real environments. Kondo (2018) revealed that the environment, peers, teacher, and related technology all played a role in students' English-speaking performance. The Seiyun Model Secondary School students ascribed their improvement in English speaking to their English club, in which they meet weekly and practice English either among themselves or by visiting or inviting people who speak English, including native speakers who come to Yemen to study Sharia in some Islamic institutes. In this situation, the school created a productive and working environment for students to communicate in English. As the English proverb states, 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' If students are sincere in learning a language, they will easily create an environment that can enhance their learning.

Environment is the main reason that helps learners to be good speakers. It becomes clear that one of the solutions to speed learning is to cut out Arabic socialization and socialize with friends who are keen to speak in English. It is well-established that a friendly and cooperative environment can enhance learners' oral performance (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). One respondent stated that many school students fail to speak English though they study it for a longer period of time due to the demotivating environment surrounding them. Long (1981) suggested that it is not what the learner hears but how they interact that matters. Learners who just spend time listening to or watching media may not be able to successfully acquire speaking skills, as there is no real interaction between them and the people they listen to. A supportive environment is one of the crucial factors for non-English major college students in Indonesia to successfully communicate in English (Fatimah, Adiprima & Abdullah, 2023).

Motivation to Learn

All the participants' motivation to learn English demonstrates the significance of learner autonomy, as Benson (2013) argues that successful language acquisition requires autonomous learning. This is further supported by the high self-motivation, which is consistent with Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System theory, which emphasizes the importance of motivation in language learning. According to one of the respondents, self-study and increased motivation are the only ways for learners who are genuinely interested in learning a language to succeed. A person who wants to speak English must not be embarrassed to use the language in public or fear making mistakes. According to Leong and Ahmadi's (2017) paper, "Students who have higher motivation and lower anxiety can speak easily and effectively." These findings are consistent with that finding. One student expressed his opinion that English is a very simple language that can be learned through independent study. Another student said that although he struggled with English last year, he improved greatly this year through independent study and drive. We can say that students who begin learning English in their way may find that it is one of the easiest languages to learn and that having a positive attitude toward the language will help them learn and speak it fluently. Another student in secondary school claimed that he was able to communicate in English because he had studied it during his leisure time. For him, learning English is therefore a pastime. People engage in activities they enjoy when they have free time. In this instance, the student enjoys learning English and gets enthusiastic about it, which is why he typically spends his leisure time honing his skills in it.

Motivations include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors are illustrated by the non-English majors' desire to enjoy media (such as movies and global content) and pursue personal growth (e.g., "accepting the challenge to stand out"). Conversely, the extrinsic factors represent the incentives these non-English majors have for preparing for exams (such as TOEFL and university admissions) and for aspiring to distinguished careers (in global communication and business). The participants attribute English-speaking success to their desire to understand the world around them and to prepare themselves for things like university exams or the TOEFL. Some participants framed English as a personal challenge, with one stating, "Accepting the challenge to stand out." This finding supports Gardner's (1985) integrative-instrumental framework, which explains participants' dual focus on global connectivity (integrative) and exams (instrumental). Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System further contextualizes their drive to become "global citizens" while meeting academic demands. In support of this finding, Shi, Harrison and Henry (2017) prove that non-native English-speaking students attribute their persistence and success to internal and external factors.

Thinking in English

Thinking in English is one of the cognitive immersion techniques that help students improve their fluency. Reflecting on the ideas of self-regulated learning, one participant highlighted mental practice, saying, "Thinking in English while walking or commuting helps" (Zimmerman, 2002). Additionally mentioned were structured resources like educational series (like "English Speech with Subtitles").

Learning Techniques

Most students realize the importance of using English learning series and apps. Many non-English majors stated that they are following English learning programs such as 'Effortless English,' using mobile apps for learning English such as Duolingo. These answers display that English speaking can be developed through media individually and away from the class, by installing some English learning apps and downloading videos from the web or watching videos online. These results are supported by Hwang, Rahimi and Fathi (2024), who found out that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has a greater influence on improving learners' speaking performance than face-to-face instruction. Most of the techniques mentioned above are done outside the classroom, and this supports the idea that classrooms cannot assist much in improving learners' speaking performance due to several problems, including inhibition, lack of motivation, low participation, and use of the mother tongue (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Using a range of learning strategies is part of the holistic approach that successful learners typically take to learning (Zha & Liu, 2023; Rahman, 2018). Students utilized technology effectively, employing apps (like Duolingo), social media, and online resources that facilitate self-directed learning. One of the participants described, "I search everything in English online… even medical terms."

Confidence

Confidence plays a significant role. This aligns with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Copes (1986), who suggested that confidence is crucial for language learning success. Almost all students confirmed that they feel confident in speaking English. One of them said that he feels more confident speaking to native speakers than to non-native speakers because, as he said, native speakers are very supportive. There is evidence that watching videos has a good impact on increasing interest, motivation, and self-confidence in speaking English (Qomaria & Zaim, 2021). In another similar study, online videos helped students to build their confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety (Kew, Hashemi, Quvanch, Angelov, Al-dheleai, Tajik & Koh, 2023). The use of video improved students' speaking ability while making learning more enjoyable. Other studies emphasized the positive impact of using videos on English speaking performance (Minh, 2023; Rastari, Putra & Suwastini, 2023; Widyawan & Hartati, 2016)."

The non-English majors stated that they initially felt anxiety, but with practice and supportive environments, they were able to overcome their anxiety. A participant admitted, "In the beginning, I was afraid to speak," mirroring Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety theory. Confidence is gained through interactions with native speakers. Confidence grew through supportive environments, aligning with Swain's (1995) emphasis on collaborative output. These results underscore the need for safe spaces to practice speaking without fear of judgment. Minh and Nam (2021) concluded that a supportive classroom environment that encourages participation and reduces intimidation is essential for these learners.

Grammar in Speaking

Grammar was deemed less critical for casual conversations but vital in formal/academic settings and viewed as context-dependent. One participant argued, "Grammar isn't important for everyday talk but vital in formal settings," while another noted, "It comes naturally over time." The contextual view of grammar supports VanPatten's (2017) argument that implicit acquisition suffices for communicative fluency and explicit instruction is secondary for it. However, participants acknowledged grammar's role in formal settings, advocating a balanced pedagogy prioritizing communication while addressing grammar in academic contexts (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

Role of School Education

Formal instruction methods, namely traditional English courses and grammar study, receive less emphasis. It's worth noting that while avoiding grammar study is mentioned, it's not a universally adopted strategy. Similarly, formal English courses are not dismissed entirely, suggesting that a balanced approach incorporating both traditional and modern learning methods might be beneficial. However, around half of the respondents confirmed that many school students fail to speak English because many schools do not teach how to speak English; students just learn grammar at school. Concentration on grammar creates fear of mistakes and inhibition to speak English in public. The respondents also certified that primary schools have no role in improving their English speaking.

Primary schools were criticized for fostering disinterest through grammar-heavy, exam-focused instruction. One stated, "They taught English as a subject to memorize, not for communication." Poor resources (e.g., "unclear cassettes") and teacher-centered methods exacerbated this issue. Primary schools' failure to adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Savignon, 2002) stifled intrinsic motivation, a gap non-English majors addressed through media integration and practice. Overemphasis on exams and rote memorization created negative attitudes, highlighting the need for curriculum reforms prioritizing speaking and listening.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight that effective English language acquisition among non-English majors is driven by extensive listening exposure to native speakers through media, consistent speaking practice, and strong motivation linked to personal and professional goals. Thinking in English and utilizing diverse learning techniques, such as subtitles, language apps, and structured courses, further enhance fluency. Confidence-building plays a crucial role in overcoming speaking anxiety, while grammar is viewed as essential for formal settings but less critical in casual conversations. Additionally, traditional school education often emphasizes grammar at the expense of practical speaking skills, underscoring the need for a more communicative approach. This study hence aims to identify the strategies leading to the success of non-English majors in acquiring proficiency in speaking English as a foreign language.

Benefits obtained from research results

The findings that have been discussed provide several significant insights that can significantly enhance English language training for non-majors. One of the main advantages mentioned is the possibility of better curriculum design. By combining practical speaking exercises with grammar instruction, schools can create a more balanced approach and close the current gap in students' oral communication abilities. Additionally, learning can be made more effective and engaging by combining different listening exposures, such as news, songs, and movies. Instead of depending solely on direct translation, teachers are urged to use activities that encourage internalization of the language to foster an environment where students think in English. While daily English practice and interaction with native speakers are crucial for improving fluency, the incorporation of apps, subtitles, and online resources can further support a variety of learning styles.

Furthermore, improving student motivation is crucial, and this can be achieved by tailoring lessons to align with students' interests in movies, exams, careers, and global communication. Highlighting the real-world benefits of English proficiency not only boosts engagement but also sustains long-term motivation. Additionally, building confidence and reducing anxiety in students is fundamental to their learning process. Schools can implement activities designed to boost confidence, such as role-playing and interactive discussions, while fostering peer conversations and offering supportive feedback can help students overcome shyness, ultimately leading to improved spoken English skills. Lastly, practical applications for English learning are essential; structured courses combined with self-learning opportunities through apps and subtitles offer a more comprehensive educational approach, while chances to interact with native speakers, such as through online language exchanges, can significantly enhance students' real-world communication skills.

These insights suggest that shifting from a grammar-heavy approach to a more interactive and practical learning experience can significantly benefit non-English majors in mastering the language. Schools, teachers, and policymakers can use these findings to design more effective English programs.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations regarding how English-speaking skills should be developed by other non-English majors or educational contexts such as schools and policymakers.

Teachers and before them, policymakers should take insights from the findings of the research to ease the way for other students to develop their speaking fluency in English by following the steps of the successful non-English majors and adopting the strategies and factors that help them to succeed in speaking skills. Some of the pedagogical actions include integrating authentic media (e.g., films, podcasts) for contextualized input and promoting technology-assisted learning (e.g., Duolingo, YouTube). Practice could be made easier by designing low-anxiety environments (e.g., peer groups, native speaker exchanges). Primary curricula should be reformed to prioritize communication over grammar drills. Additionally, educators and language programs might consider incorporating elements that cater to both types of motivation to enhance speaking skill development among non-English majors.

Teachers should not confine the teaching of English to the classroom, and they should create many opportunities for students to be in contact with English outside the classroom because English speaking can be mastered better outside the classroom. English teachers at school and English professors in the English department should encourage students to improve their English outside the classroom by giving them assignments where they can use media and technology to listen to English and record themselves practicing speaking English individually or chorally. Teachers should increase the desire and interest of their students in learning English and help them realize the need for English in their present and future lives. Students will excel in English speaking if they can develop an interest in themselves towards learning and speaking English.

As for non-English majors, the study recommends that they should use the different techniques available in this era of technology, which leaves no excuse for learners not to develop their English proficiency. Learners should strive to establish a flourishing environment for themselves to practice English, and this is possible provided that the learners have the sincerity to make it true.

Some recommendations should be presented to the Ministry of Education, such as studying the efficiency of teaching some school subjects in English, such as science subjects, for Yemeni students to be good at English. Awareness should be raised by the Ministry of Education English among learners that they need not become satisfied with the English that they learn in the classroom; they must develop their speaking skills by themselves. This must happen because most of the English that is taught at college is about language, e.g., phonology and phonetics, and syntax, and it does not focus on how learners can improve their language skills.

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Exploring the Impact of Microsoft Flip on Vocabulary Retention of Thai Business English Undergraduates

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the video discussion platform, Microsoft Flip, on vocabulary retention among Business English undergraduate students in a Thai EFL context. It also examines students' perceptions of the platform's use as a pedagogical tool. Employing a one-group pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design, the study involved 15 purposively sampled Business English majors at Roi Et Rajabhat University who participated in an 8-week vocabulary intervention using Microsoft Flip. Data were collected through pre- and post-vocabulary tests and a mixed-methods student perception questionnaire. A paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in overall vocabulary acquisition scores from pre-test to post-test ($t(14) = 5.87$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.51$), indicating that Microsoft Flip positively affected vocabulary retention. Further analysis of paired t-tests showed significant gains in both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the questionnaire data demonstrated overwhelmingly positive student perceptions, highlighting enhanced engagement, perceived learning effectiveness, and increased confidence in using specialized vocabulary. These findings suggest that Microsoft Flip can be a valuable tool for EFL vocabulary instruction, offering interactive and engaging opportunities for learners. The study provides practical pedagogical implications for integrating video-based, student-centered platforms into language classrooms and lays the groundwork for future research in diverse EFL contexts.

Keywords: microsoft flip, vocabulary retention, EFL, Business English, technology-enhanced learning

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, English has solidified its position as the international lingua franca, making proficiency indispensable across professional domains (Crystal, 2012). For university graduates aspiring to careers in commerce and industry, a strong command of Business English is no longer merely an asset but a fundamental requirement for effective communication, negotiation, and overall professional success (Donna, 2000). Consequently, higher education institutions are tasked with equipping students with the robust English language skills needed to thrive in the global marketplace.

Despite the critical importance of English, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face persistent challenges in acquiring and, more importantly, retaining vocabulary (Thornbury, 2002). Vocabulary acquisition is widely recognized as the cornerstone of language proficiency, underpinning the development of all four macro-skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Wilkins, 1972). Without a robust lexicon, effective communication remains severely hampered, regardless of grammatical knowledge (Schmitt, 2010). In the Thai context, EFL students often encounter specific hurdles, including limited exposure to authentic English outside the classroom, a reliance on rote memorization, and insufficient opportunities for active, contextualized vocabulary use, which leads to poor long-term retention (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013).

In response, language education has increasingly turned to digital tools to create more engaging and effective learning environments. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) offers unprecedented opportunities to diversify learning modalities, provide authentic input, and facilitate interaction (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). Platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) and mobile applications have become integral to modern pedagogy, aiming to address the limitations of traditional classroom settings (Godwin-Jones, 2017).

Microsoft Flip (formerly Flipgrid) has gained considerable traction among these emerging tools. Flip is a video discussion platform where educators post prompts and students respond with short videos, fostering asynchronous interaction (Green & Blevins, 2022). Its video-centric nature aligns with communicative language teaching principles by promoting authentic language production and peer collaboration (Kaur & Meni, 2021). While recent studies have highlighted the positive perceptions and engagement benefits of video-based platforms in language learning (Sujarwati et al., 2025; Kaur & Meni, 2021), a critical research gap persists regarding the specific empirical impact of Microsoft Flip on quantifiable vocabulary *retention* among Business English students, particularly within the distinct Thai EFL context**.** This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating how Microsoft Flip can support the long-term acquisition of Business English vocabulary. This study's findings are expected to provide practical teaching insights for incorporating video-based, student-centered platforms into EFL vocabulary lessons, especially within Business English education in Thailand.

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of using Microsoft Flip on the overall vocabulary retention (pre-test vs. post-test scores) of Business English undergraduate students

2. To analyze the impact of Microsoft Flip on specific aspects of vocabulary acquisition, namely, receptive and productive knowledge

3. To explore Business English undergraduate students' perceptions regarding using Microsoft Flip for vocabulary learning

Research Methodology

This study used a quantitative research approach to assess Business English undergraduate students' perceptions of using Microsoft Flip to support their vocabulary learning. Quantitative data were collected from vocabulary tests administered before and after the Microsoft Flip intervention, as well as from a questionnaire given after the intervention to gauge students' perceptions. Qualitative data was obtained from open-ended questions that invited students to share their experiences.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of freshman Business English majors at Roi Et Rajabhat University during the second semester of the 2024 academic year. A purposive sample of fifteen (15) students was chosen. It is crucial to acknowledge that while this sample size was appropriate for an in-depth exploratory study within this specific intact classroom setting, its small scale inherently limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of EFL learners. This non-probability sampling method specifically included participants who were actively studying Business English and could provide relevant insights into the intervention (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Design

This study employed a one-group pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design, a design commonly used in educational settings to evaluate changes in a group following an intervention (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The design is represented as:

$$O1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O2$$

O1 is the pre-test, X is the 8-week Microsoft Flip intervention, and O2 is the post-test. While this design has limitations regarding internal validity, it is practical for exploratory research within intact classroom settings.

Research Instruments

This study used two primary instruments: vocabulary tests (pre- and post-) and a student perception questionnaire, both of which were carefully designed to collect detailed data from the Business English undergraduate students regarding using Microsoft Flip in vocabulary retention.

Vocabulary Tests: A 50-item test, balanced between receptive (e.g., matching) and productive (e.g., fill-in-the-blanks) tasks, was developed based on the Business English curriculum. The test's content validity was established through review by three English language teaching experts. A pilot study with a similar student group yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = .85$, indicating good internal consistency and reliability (Taber, 2018).

Student Perception Questionnaire: This instrument contained 20 Likert-scale items (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) and three open-ended questions. The items were designed to assess usability, engagement, and perceived learning outcomes. The scale demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = .91$.

The open-ended questions invited students to elaborate on their experiences. The content validity of both instruments was measured using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), with scores of 0.7 for the Vocabulary and 0.8 for the questionnaire, respectively, indicating strong agreement among three language experts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following strict ethical approval, the research started with administering the pre-test to all participants in Week 1. This initial assessment, a 50-item vocabulary test carefully designed to cover both receptive (e.g., matching) and productive (e.g., fill-in-the-blank) knowledge of Business English vocabulary from the curriculum, established baseline proficiency. An intensive 8-week intervention period then began. During this phase, students actively used Microsoft Flip, completing a series of structured weekly vocabulary tasks. These tasks specifically required students to produce video responses, articulate definitions, use target vocabulary in context, and interact with peers' submissions through video comments or written feedback, promoting active language use and collaborative learning. After the intervention concluded in Week 10, a post-test identical to the pre-test was administered to assess vocabulary growth. At the same time, a comprehensive student perception questionnaire, comprising 20 Likert-scale items and three open-ended questions, was distributed to capture nuanced experiences related to usability, engagement, and perceived learning outcomes.

For quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, minimums, and maximums) are used to summarize test scores. Paired-samples t-tests were used to identify significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores for overall vocabulary, as well as receptive and productive vocabulary, utilizing IBM SPSS (Version 28.0). Meanwhile, qualitative data from the open-ended questions in the perception questionnaire underwent a careful thematic analysis, following the systematic procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012), to identify common patterns, ideas, and themes in students' responses and experiences.

Research Results

1. To investigate the effectiveness of using Microsoft Flip on the overall vocabulary retention (pre-test vs. post-test scores) of Business English undergraduate students

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores for overall vocabulary retention. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-test results.

Table 1

Overall Vocabulary Scores and Paired-Samples t-test Results (N=15)

Test	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. of Difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)/p-value
Pre-test	15	28.33	4.12					
Post-test	15	40.53	3.89					
Difference				12.20	8.08	5.87	14	<.001

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for the pre-test was 28.33 (S.D. = 4.12), while the post-test score increased significantly to 40.53 (S.D. = 3.89). This reflects an average gain of 12.20 points per student. To verify if this increase was statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was performed. The results showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores (t (14) = 5.87, p < .001). Since the p-value (< .001) is lower than the usual alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no significant difference in overall vocabulary scores before and after using Microsoft Flip is rejected. The Cohen's d of 1.51 indicates a very large effect size, suggesting that the Microsoft Flip intervention had a substantial and positive impact on students' overall Business English vocabulary learning. This result clearly shows that using Microsoft Flip significantly improved students' Business English vocabulary retention.

2. To analyze the impact of Microsoft Flip on specific aspects of vocabulary acquisition, namely, receptive and productive knowledge.

Further analysis was conducted to examine the impact of Microsoft Flip on different aspects of vocabulary acquisition: receptive vocabulary (recognition) and productive vocabulary (usage). Paired-samples t-tests were conducted for each aspect, with the descriptive statistics and t-test results presented in Table 2.

Further analysis was conducted to examine the impact of Microsoft Flip on different aspects of vocabulary acquisition: receptive vocabulary (recognition) and productive vocabulary (usage). Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and paired t-tests for these two aspects.

Table 2

Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Scores and Paired-Samples t-test Results (N=15)

Aspect	Test	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. of Difference	t-value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)/ p-value
Receptive	Pre-test	15	16.20	2.58					
	Post-test	15	21.87	2.13					
	Difference				5.67	4.51	4.87	14	<.001
Productive	Pre-test	15	12.13	2.19					
	Post-test	15	18.67	1.76					
	Difference				6.53	3.99	6.34	14	<.001

As shown in Table 2, both receptive and productive vocabulary scores improved from pre-test to post-test. For receptive vocabulary, the mean score increased from 16.20 (SD = 2.58) to 21.87 (SD = 2.13). For productive vocabulary, the mean score went up from 12.13 (SD = 2.19) to 18.67 (SD = 1.76). The results in Table 2 demonstrate that Microsoft Flip significantly impacted both receptive and productive vocabulary development. A statistically significant improvement was observed for receptive vocabulary (t (14) = 4.87, p < .001) and for productive vocabulary (t (14) = 6.34, p < .001). The Cohen's d values of 1.26 for receptive vocabulary and 1.64 for

productive vocabulary both indicate very large effects. Notably, the gain in productive vocabulary scores (mean difference = 6.53) was slightly higher than that for receptive vocabulary (mean difference = 5.67), strongly suggesting that the video-based output feature of Flip particularly boosted active use and recall of Business English terms. This indicates that the increase in productive vocabulary (mean difference = 6.53) was slightly greater than in receptive vocabulary (mean difference = 5.67), showing that Flip's video-based output especially encouraged the active use and recall of Business English vocabulary, resulting in more substantial improvements in productive knowledge.

3. To explore Business English undergraduate students' perceptions regarding using Microsoft Flip for vocabulary learning

The analysis of the questionnaire data showed overwhelmingly positive opinions from Business English undergraduate students about using Microsoft Flip for vocabulary learning.

Quantitative Results (Likert Scale)

Table 3 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for the Likert scale items, categorized by thematic areas. The 5-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) indicates that higher mean scores reflect more positive perceptions.

Table 3

Student Perceptions towards Microsoft Flip for Vocabulary Learning (N=15)

Thematic Area	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Interpretation
Usability & Accessibility	4.45	0.58	Students found Microsoft Flip very easy to use and navigate.
Engagement & Motivation	4.62	0.49	Students were highly engaged and motivated by Microsoft Flip.
Perceived Learning Outcomes	4.38	0.65	Students believed Microsoft Flip significantly helped their learning.
Overall Satisfaction	4.55	0.52	Students were very satisfied with using Microsoft Flip.

The quantitative results indicate a strong positive perception across all thematic areas. Students rated "Engagement & Motivation" highest ($\bar{x} = 4.62$), followed closely by "Overall Satisfaction" ($\bar{x} = 4.55$) and "Usability & Accessibility" ($\bar{x} = 4.45$). "Perceived Learning Outcomes" also showed a high mean score of 4.38. These high mean scores suggest that students found Microsoft Flip user-friendly, highly engaging, and effective for their Business English vocabulary acquisition.

Qualitative Results (Open-ended Questions)

The thematic analysis of the open-ended questionnaire responses further substantiated the positive quantitative findings, revealing three prominent themes: Enhanced Engagement and Fun, Practical Application and Confidence, and Peer Interaction and Feedback. While not formally quantified by frequency counts due to the exploratory nature of the qualitative component, these themes were consistently articulated by a majority of participants.

Theme 1: Enhanced Engagement and Fun

Many students expressed that Microsoft Flip made vocabulary learning more enjoyable and less tedious than traditional methods. The video-based format was particularly appealing.

"*Learning new words with Flip was so much fun! It's better than just reading from a book because I can see and hear myself."* (Student 3)

"*I always dreaded vocabulary memorization, but recording videos made it feel like a game. It kept me motivated."* (Student 8)

"*It's a creative way to learn. I liked adding stickers and using different backgrounds; it made me less nervous."* (Student 11)

Theme 2: Practical Application and Confidence

Students reported that Flip helped them actively apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts, boosting their confidence in speaking and using Business English terms. Creating videos forced them to move from receptive recognition to productive use.

"*Having to explain the business terms in my own words and give examples helped me understand them deeply. It's not just memorizing."* (Student 5)

"*I feel more confident speaking Business English now. Before, I only knew the words, but couldn't use them. Flip made me use them."* (Student 14)

"*It was challenging at first to record myself, but then I got used to it and felt proud when I could explain things clearly in English."* (Student 7)

Theme 3: Peer Interaction and Feedback

The opportunity to watch and respond to peers' videos was highlighted as a significant benefit, fostering a collaborative learning environment and providing diverse perspectives.

"*I learned a lot from watching my friends' videos. Sometimes they explained a word in a way I hadn't thought of, or used it in a new sentence*." (Student 2)

"*Giving feedback to my classmates made me think more carefully about the vocabulary. It's like teaching, so it really solidified my own understanding*." (Student 9)

"*The comments and replies from my teacher and friends were very helpful. It felt like a real conversation, not just a test."* (Student 13)

Discussion

Our study makes a critical and timely contribution by empirically demonstrating a statistically significant improvement in Business English vocabulary retention directly attributable to the use of Microsoft Flip. This strong quantitative evidence, supported by large effect sizes, goes beyond anecdotal reports and convincingly validates Flip's pedagogical effectiveness for language learning. The requirement for students to create videos directly supports Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which claims that language production ("pushed output") encourages learners to process language more deeply. By articulating definitions and using terms in context, students engage in meaningful cognitive processing that, according to Craik and Lockhart's (1972) levels of processing framework, results in more durable memory traces. This addresses the common challenge faced by Thai EFL students of superficial rote memorization (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). The significant increase in productive vocabulary is especially important, as it indicates that video-based production tasks can effectively bridge the gap between passive knowledge and active use-an essential goal in language proficiency.

Furthermore, the interactive features of Flip profoundly resonate with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Peer-to-peer commenting and feedback fostered a dynamic Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where students could co-construct knowledge and learn from each other. This finding strongly corroborates other recent research indicating that the social and interactive nature of Flip promotes language learning and reduces anxiety (Green & Blevins, 2022; Kaur & Meni, 2021). The overwhelming positive student perceptions gathered in our study further strengthen these quantitative findings, consistently highlighting enhanced engagement, increased confidence, and perceived learning effectiveness. This positive reception is highly consistent with prior studies that frame Flip as a tool merging social media conventions with academic tasks, thereby significantly increasing student buy-in (Johnson & Skarphol, 2018). The students' palpable sense of improved confidence and their appreciation for peer learning unequivocally underscore Flip's robust capacity to foster a supportive and collaborative learning community, effectively addressing the affective filter that can hinder language production (Krashen, 1982).

While the positive results are clear, it is important to carefully examine potential confounding variables. The observed improvements could be influenced by factors such as the inherent novelty effect of introducing new technology, which often generates initial excitement. Additionally, the specific nature of teacher support and scaffolding provided during the intervention, along with the unique peer influence dynamics within this particular classroom, may have played a role. These considerations are common in quasi-experimental designs and highlight the need for future research that includes control groups. Compared to earlier studies, this research uniquely provides empirical, quantitative evidence of vocabulary retention, specifically differentiating between receptive and productive gains-a distinction often lacking in perception-focused studies. While Green and Blevins (2022) and Kaur and Meni (2021) emphasized positive perceptions of Flip, our study confirms these perceptions with measurable learning outcomes, demonstrating how these positive experiences translate into real improvements in vocabulary mastery within a specific EFL setting.

Recommendations

Based on this study's compelling findings, several recommendations are proposed for both teaching practice and future research. From a teaching perspective, the results strongly support the strategic use of video-based output tools, such as Microsoft Flip, in EFL curricula to enhance traditional vocabulary teaching. Educators are encouraged to create tasks that require students to actively produce language in meaningful contexts, moving beyond passive knowledge and encouraging deeper thinking and stronger retention. To maximize the platform's benefits, instructors should carefully design activities that foster authentic peer interaction and constructive feedback, which supports a collaborative learning environment and can greatly reduce language-production anxiety. It is also highly recommended to scaffold these activities, starting with low-stakes tasks to gradually build student confidence before progressing to more challenging assignments. To ensure successful implementation, curriculum designers should embed Flip-based vocabulary tasks into course structures, while IT staff must provide reliable access and technical support for both teachers and students. Institutional backing, including teacher training and resource allocation, is also vital for widespread adoption and effective pedagogical use.

For future research, this study provides an essential foundation for more comprehensive investigations. Subsequent studies should replicate this research with a substantially larger and more diverse sample, along with a more rigorous quasi-experimental design that includes a carefully matched control group. This will significantly improve both the internal validity and generalizability of the results. Additionally, longitudinal studies are crucial to assess vocabulary retention over longer periods, offering valuable insights into the long-term effectiveness of this learning method. Comparative research examining the effectiveness of Microsoft Flip against other technology-enhanced vocabulary tools or traditional methods, using varied assessment types, could also give educators vital information for making informed instructional decisions. Finally, future studies might explore how video-based platforms influence other key language skills, such as oral fluency, pronunciation, presentation skills, and intercultural communicative competence across different EFL settings.

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Investigation of Extramural English Activities Practices among Chinese EFL High School Students with Different English Proficiency Levels

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Abstract

This study explores the participation of Chinese high school EFL students in extramural English activities, emphasizing their preferences and attitudes across different English proficiency levels. The research was carried out at Guolong Foreign Language School in Guilin, Guangxi, involving 192 students who were grouped into high, medium, and low English proficiency based on their recent English examination scores. A mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire data and follow-up interview, was employed to gather comprehensive insights. Findings indicate that students predominantly engage in passive learning activities, such as watching English movies and listening to English music, while participation in interactive activities, like English corners or online conversations, remains notably low. High-English proficiency students displayed greater confidence and independently utilized a variety of resources to enhance their learning. Conversely, low-English proficiency students struggled with comprehension difficulties and showed limited motivation to participate actively. The study suggests that providing more accessible, engaging, and student-centered interactive activities could significantly support second language acquisition and boost students' engagement across all English proficiency levels, fostering improved English learning outcomes.

Keywords: extramural English activities practices, different English proficiency level, second language acquisition, Chinese high school EFL students

Introduction

It has been well admitted that only engaging in studying English inside the classroom may not be sufficient for students to cope with global English and the issues of intercultural understanding. EFL scholars; therefore, focus on students' self-initiated, out-of-class efforts like autonomous, extramural, informal, naturalistic, non-formal, out-of-school, and self-directed language learning (Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2023). Extramural English activities are informal and interest-driven practices. Unlike classroom learning, where students often have limited choices, these activities allow students to pursue what they genuinely enjoy (Peters, 2018; Sundqvist, 2009).

Sundqvist and Uztosun (2023) argue that this model is rooted in L2 sociocultural theory. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), the theory comprises three interrelated levels: activity, action, and operation. At the activity level, tasks demand varied skills; at the action level, motives drive goal-directed behavior; and at the operational level, autonomy emerges through "automatized and habituated actions that respond to the immediate social-material conditions at hand" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), enhancing confidence and willingness to communicate (Lai, Zhu & Gong, 2015; Lee & Drajati, 2020).

Building on this theoretical foundation, scholars have also paid attention to the tools and contexts that facilitate extramural English learning. Internet platforms such as streaming services, social media, online games, Duolingo, BBC Learning English, Coursera, Rosetta Stone, HelloTalk, Zoom, Skype, VR, AR, and community-based forums like Facebook groups and Reddit provide flexible, immersive learning environments (Mao, 2023). In China, policy changes have created more room for such practices. The Double-Reduction Policy, issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council in July 2021, reduces homework burdens, while the Quality Education policy shifts the focus from exam-oriented learning to holistic learning development. These initiatives have freed up time for students to engage in extramural English activities such as reading, movies, music, English corners, and online courses, fostering greater autonomy and diverse skill development (Cao, 2023). Yet, Chinese high school students still struggle to adapt from test-focused English learning to more communicative and interest-driven approaches, highlighting the growing importance of extramural learning in improving both language proficiency and motivation.

This research article examines the role of extramural English learning on Chinese high school EFL students with varying English proficiency levels at Guolong Foreign Language School in Guilin, China, and explores their views on these activities. Theoretically, it enriches second language acquisition frameworks by extending the focus beyond classroom strategies (Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2023). Practically, it helps teachers tailor instructional methods-for example, by recommending suitable activities-and informs policymakers on how to better integrate real-world resources based on the evidence presented. Socially, it contributes to enhancing students' English literacy and competitiveness in a globalized context, filling gaps in the current understanding of how extramural English affects EFL learners and aligning with the broader goals of educational reform.

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the types of extramural English activities that Chinese high school students with different English proficiency levels engage in

2. To investigate the perceptions and motivations of Chinese high school students with different English proficiency levels regarding extramural English learning

This study reveals the diverse ways in which Chinese high school students are exposed to English outside the classroom, which is crucial for understanding their language learning processes and outcomes. The findings can provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers to develop effective strategies that support students' autonomous learning. In addition, the results may inform the design of more targeted

and engaging English teaching programs that align with students' interests and needs, thereby enhancing their language proficiency and learning motivation.

Literature Review

1. The concepts of extramural activities

Extramural English, coined by Sundqvist (Sundqvist, 2009), refers to English exposure outside classroom walls, suggesting distinct from educational settings. Etymologically, "extra" means outside and "mural" means wall, implying activities beyond school boundaries. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) differentiate it from extracurricular activities, which are school-organized efforts like film clubs aimed at improving language proficiency. Extramural activities, however, occur outside institutions without a teaching focus, driven by learners' interests and recreational pursuits. While extracurricular activities involve planned language goals, extramural ones may unintentionally boost skills through enjoyment (Nunan-Richards, 2015). Both accelerate second language acquisition by enabling functional practice (Bialystok, 1981), highlighting their role in students' self-directed language development.

2. Support of Second Language Acquisition Theory for Extramural English Activities

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories offer strong support for the effectiveness of extramural English activities in promoting language development across different proficiency levels. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input (i+1) in language acquisition, which can be naturally provided through activities such as watching English movies or reading novels (Ellis, 2008). Swain's Output Hypothesis (1995) complements this view by highlighting the role of meaningful language output in developing accuracy and fluency, often observed in communicative settings like English corners or online discussions (DeKeyser, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2007). From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky's theory (1978) and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) illustrate how learners benefit from guided participation and interaction, which are common in extramural environments such as gaming communities or social media exchanges (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Meanwhile, Dörnyei's (2005) motivation theory underscores the power of personally meaningful and interest-driven activities in sustaining learner engagement, especially when students are able to select materials aligned with their goals and preferences (Gardner, 2010; Ushioda, 2013). Together, these theoretical perspectives frame this study's dual focus: first, on the types of extramural English activities students with varying English proficiency levels engage in; and second, on their perceptions and motivations in relation to these experiences.

3. Students' views on extramural English activities

Students' engagement with extramural English is shaped by a range of affective and contextual factors, including interest, motivation, support systems, and anxiety. Research consistently shows that most students hold positive attitudes toward extramural activities such as movies and games, which can improve vocabulary and listening skills in a relaxed and enjoyable way (Lai, Zhu & Gong, 2015; Peters, 2018; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). However, the extent of benefit often depends on the

student's level of autonomy; more self-directed students tend to make greater use of digital tools like Duolingo, while lower-proficiency students often require more structured support (Little, 1991; Sockett, 2014). External support from family and schools can also influence participation, as encouragement and access to resources to create a more enabling environment (Lamb, 2017). Conversely, anxiety and low self-confidence, particularly in speaking-focused settings like English corners, can hinder active participation (Dewaele, 2018; Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Teachers may reduce these negative effects by creating low-risk, collaborative learning spaces such as small-group discussions (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). These findings collectively inform the present study's second research objective by identifying how students' perceptions-specifically their attitudes, motivations, and anxieties-vary across different levels of English proficiency, and how these differences shape their engagement with extramural English.

4. The importance of extramural activities

Limited classroom time hinders comprehensive English learning, making extramural activities vital (Lin & Li, 2021). China's Double-Reduction and Quality Education policies emphasize their role in reducing burdens and fostering holistic growth (Fei, 2022; Pan, 2013; Wu, 2024; Yu, 2024). Classroom constraints-few hours and exam focus-limit skill development (Wang, 2024; Wu, 2021). Extramural activities extend exposure via movies, songs, and apps like Duolingo, enhancing proficiency and interest (Hong & Yufang, 2021; Zhao, 2024). Technology amplifies this with flexible, personalized resources (Deng, Wu & Chen, 2024; Jones & Raees, 2023; Wei, Sulaiman, & Ismail, 2024), meeting diverse needs and boosting autonomy (Chen, Guo & Kuai, 2022; Wang, 2023; Xiang, 2023).

5. Extramural English learning mode

The Extramural English learning model benefits Chinese high school students by increasing input (e.g., English corners, movies) and output (e.g., teacher interactions), enhancing comprehension, speaking, and confidence (Lazaro & Mascuñana, 2022; Wu & Peng, 2022). Social media fosters collective learning, integrating students into English communities (Cao, 2022). Language communication activities, like local exchanges, boost oral skills and cultural adaptability (Chen, 2025; Liu & Han, 2022; Wu, 2021). This model significantly improves proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening (Li & Wang, 2017; Pan, 2013), and subject performance by deepening language knowledge and self-discipline (Yaman & Sahin, 2019). Technology, including platforms and apps, offers flexible, gamified learning, while virtual tools like video chats break geographical barriers, aided by AI for personalized support (Li & Wang, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2021). It complements classroom learning by enriching resources, experiences, and motivation, creating a synergistic effect that enhances overall English development (Signe, 2023).

6. Research Methodology

Considering the research context of Chinese high school EFL students with different English proficiency levels, the authors adopted a descriptive statistics research method and integrated quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively respond to and elicit more in-depth data to achieve research objectives.

7. Research design

This mixed-methods study investigates extramural English activities and students' views across English proficiency levels, using questionnaires for quantitative data and semi-structured interviews for qualitative depth (Creswell, 2013). Questionnaires gather primary data, while interviews explore more insights from the participants. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze patterns and opinions on extramural learning. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the interview data to supplement the research objectives.

8. Population and Sample

The research population comprises 369 high school EFL students from Guolong Foreign Language School in Guilin City, Guangxi Province, China. The study exclusively recruited second-year students with no grade retention to ensure homogeneity in age distribution with an average age of approximately 17 years, and selected students from six classes for diversity. The selection of this private institution was deliberate to ensure that most students have experience with extramural English language learning activities. The school emphasizes English learning with two teachers per class and offers regular English-related activities. The Taro Yamane formula ($n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$), where n is the sample size, N is the population (369), and e is the error (0.05), yielded a sample of 192 respondents for representativeness and reliability (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, while qualitative opinions came from semi-structured interviews with 12 volunteers, aligning with Creswell, who discussed key points of mixed methods research designs, noting that the qualitative component typically includes a smaller sample (e.g., 8-12 participants) for deep understanding and high-quality data, and Guest (Guest, 2006), who explores "data saturation" in qualitative research, suggesting 12 interviews suffice for representative analysis results with wide impact on social science sample size discussions. Table 1 shows gender balance (49.48% female, 50.52% male), age distribution (35.94% 16, 23.96% 17, 27.08% 18, 6.25% over 18, 6.77% undisclosed), English learning years (43.23% 9 years, 24.48% 10 years, 26.56% 11 years, 5.73% 12+ years), and English exam scores mostly 91-110, indicating moderate proficiency. Students were grouped by three mock exam averages from the Chinese Academy of Examinations: 11.46% below 90 (low), 61.98% 91-110 (mid), 26.56% 111-150 (high), with most in the mid-range (Guest, 2006).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Basic Information

Basic Demographic Information		N	Percent
Gender	Male	97	50.52%
	Female	95	49.48%
Age range	16 years old	69	35.94%
	17 years old	46	23.96%
	18 years old	52	27.08%
	Over 18 years old	12	6.25%
	Prefer not to say	13	6.77%
Years of studying English	9 years	83	43.23%
	10 years	47	24.48%
	11 years	51	26.56%
	12 years+	11	5.73%
English proficiency level group	Low English proficiency level group	22	11.46%
	Medium English proficiency level group	119	61.98%
	High English proficiency level group	51	26.56%

Research Instruments

Two research instruments, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, were employed in this study. A questionnaire was designed into three parts: 1) basic information (gender, age, duration of English learning), 2) extramural learning situations (methods and habits), and 3) self-assessment contain detail practices and perceptions across proficiency levels. A semi-structured interviews using a five-item protocol in Chinese was conducted to explore favorite methods and opinions towards extramuaral English activities practices to complement questionnaire data (Creswell, 2013).

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire and Interview Protocols

1. Content validity check

All items were first written in Chinese, translated into English, and then back-translated to confirm semantic equivalence. For content validity check, three specialists in extramural learning evaluated the bilingual versions for clarity and relevance. Using the item-objective-congruence (IOC) index, any item scoring below 0.67 was reworded or deleted; four questionnaire items were simplified for clarity or rephrased to better align with learning outcomes, such as changing abstract wording to more concrete examples. Two interview prompts were narrowed in scope to ensure focus and avoid overlapping themes.

2. Pilot testing to establish the initial reliability check

A small trial with 55 students of similar age and background identified confusing wording. Three questionnaire items were simplified, one double-barrelled item was split, and Likert-scale anchors were adjusted. The interview guide was shortened and follow-up prompts were added to improve the flow of the content.

3. Internal-consistency analysis to check reliability of the research instruments

After revisions, the 30-item questionnaire was piloted with a separate group of 30 students to check for reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha reached 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency; no further items needed removal. For the interview data, intercoder was applied. Two independent coders reached 87 % agreement on initial themes, confirming coding reliability.

This integrated approach-expert judgement, bilingual verification, piloting, and a single round of statistical checks-streamlined the methodology while ensuring that every item was both conceptually sound and statistically dependable.

Data Collection

Questionnaire was delivered online via Wenjuanxing on October 5, 2024. During data collection, questionnaires included a one-minute reminder reading to ensure accurate responses, emphasizing authenticity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Tencent Meeting on s October 10, 2024. The interview was conducted in Chinese allowed comfortable expression, with responses recorded and preserved. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, obtaining participant consent after explaining the study's purpose and process, assuring anonymity and confidentiality for research use only, prioritizing participant well-being and research integrity (Creswell, 2013). The Research Ethics approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee Board of Rangsit University before data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was applied to present the findings from the quantitative analysis data. Thematic analysis was applied for the interview data analysis. The researcher transcribed Chinese interviews into English, following familiarization, initial coding (e.g., "I enjoy watching English movies because they help me learn new words and expressions" → Learning through entertainment), and then the researcher categorized grouping into seven themes-learning through entertainment, reading, social interaction, listening/speaking methods, expression/critical thinking, reading/writing, and digital tools (e.g., "Using Duolingo and watching TED Talks has been helpful" → Digital tools) using NVIVO for systematic, reliable theme identification, capturing diverse experiences (Guest, 2006).

Results

1.Results for research objective 1: To examine the types of extramural English activities that Chinese high school students with different English proficiency levels engage in. Extramural activities practices among students with different proficiency levels are displayed in Figure 1. Figure 2 presents reasons students with different English proficiency levels participate in Extramural English activities. The time, devices and platforms the students of different English proficiency levels participating in their extramural English activities are reported in Table 2.

Figure 1

Extramural Activities Practices among Students with Different Proficiency Levels
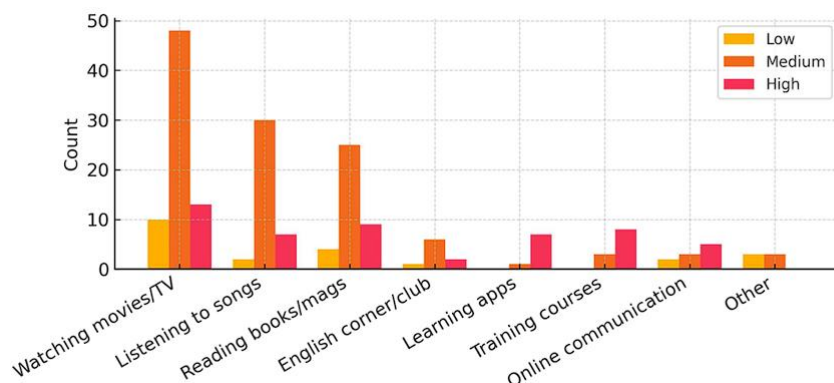
Questionnaire findings show that students' preferred extramural English activities are shaped by both their language proficiency and personal interests. Lower-English proficiency level students tend to engage in passive, input-focused activities such as watching English movies or listening to songs, which offer comfort and accessibility. In contrast, higher- English proficiency level students seem to participate more frequently in interactive, output-driven tasks like using language apps, attending training courses, or joining speech-based activities with foreign teachers, which demand active language use.

Chi-square analysis confirmed these patterns with statistically significant differences in activity choice across proficiency groups (χ^2 = 48.15, df = 14, p < .001; see Figure 1). Although watching English movies/TV shows remains the most common activity across all levels, the distribution of other activity types diverges notably. Mid-English proficiency level students show a blend of input and output activities, suggesting a shift toward more autonomous and purposeful learning. Overall, the findings seem to reveal clear evidence of Extramural English activities preferences among different English proficiency level group. Students' English proficiency level can predict the way they participate in activities from passive exposure toward more challenging and communicative forms of extramural engagement.

Figure 2

Reasons Students with Different English Proficiency Levels Participate in EE Activities
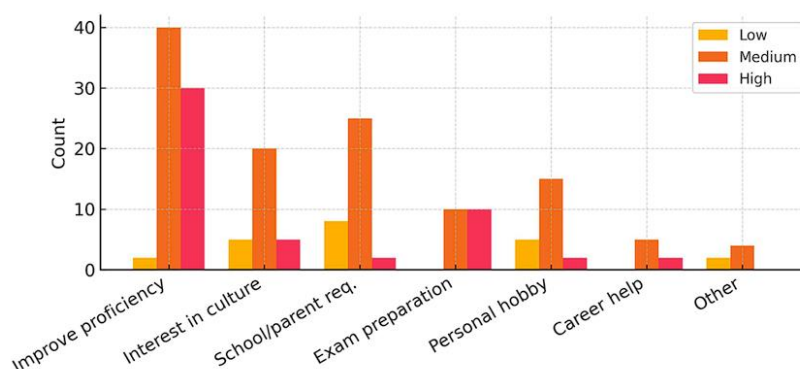
Students' motivations for engaging in extramural English activities varied significantly across proficiency levels. Chi-square analysis revealed a marked difference in motivational patterns (χ^2 = 40.55, df = 12, p < .001; see Figure 2). High-English proficiency level students were largely driven by intrinsic goals, such as improving language proficiency and personal interest, reflecting greater autonomy and long-term commitment. In contrast, low- English proficiency level students were more influenced by external expectations, particularly from schools or parents, suggesting a more passive approach. Medium- English proficiency level students exhibited a transitional profile, combining emerging self-driven goals with residual external pressures. These findings may support the idea that as proficiency increases, learners are more likely to engage in extramural activities out of genuine interest and personal development rather than obligation.

Table 2

The Time, Devices and Platforms for Students of Different English Proficiency Levels to Participate in EE Activities

		Low-level group	Medium-level group	High -level group
1.Time you spend per week participating in the extramural English activities	1) Less than 1 hour	15 (68.18%)	40 (33.61%)	5 (9.80%)
	2) 1-2 hours	5 (22.73%)	45 (37.82%)	10 (19.61%)
	3) 3-5 hours	2 (9.09%)	25 (21.01%)	20 (39.22%)
	4) Over 5 hours	0 (0%)	9 (7.56%)	16 (31.37%)
2. Tools or resources you most commonly use for extramural English learning	1) Online Dictionary	2 (9.09%)	30 (25.21%)	20 (39.22%)
	2) English learning website	0 (0%)	20 (16.81%)	15 (29.41%)
	3) English learning application	0 (0%)	25 (21.01%)	10 (19.61%)
	4) English books/textbooks	0 (0%)	10 (8.40%)	5 (9.80%)
	5) Video and audio resources (such as YouTube, Podcast)	18 (81.82%)	30 (25.21%)	1 (1.96%)
	6) Other (please specify)	2 (9.09%)	4 (3.36%)	0 (0%)
3. Devices you usually watch English movies/TV shows	1) Television	2 (9.09%)	10 (8.40%)	5 (9.80%)
	2) Computer	2 (9.09%)	20 (16.81%)	15 (29.41%)
	3) Mobile phone	15 (68.18%)	70 (58.82%)	25 (49.02%)
	4) Tablets	3 (13.64%)	15 (12.61%)	5 (9.80%)
	5) Other (please specify)	0 (0%)	4 (3.36%)	1 (1.96%)

Table 2 *(Continued)*

		Low-level group	Medium-level group	High -level group
4.The English learning applications you are using	1) Duolingo	0 (0%)	30 (25.21%)	25 (49.02%)
	2) Babbel	0 (0%)	20 (16.81%)	10 (19.61%)
	3) HelloTalk	0 (0%)	15 (12.61%)	10 (19.61%)
	4) Other (please specify)	2 (9.09%)	10 (8.40%)	5 (9.80%)
	5) No application used	20 (90.91%)	44 (36.97%)	1 (1.96%)
5.The main platform you use for online English communication	1) WeChat	10 (45.45%)	50 (42.02%)	10 (19.61%)
	2) QQ	5 (22.73%)	20 (16.81%)	5 (9.80%)
	3) Skype	0 (0%)	15 (12.61%)	15 (29.41%)
	4) Zoom	0 (0%)	20 (16.81%)	20 (39.22%)
	5) Other (please specify)	7 (31.82%)	14 (11.76%)	1 (1.96%)

Weekly time, resource choice, and technology use all varied systematically with proficiency. Most low-English proficiency level learners spent little more than a casual glance at English each week and relied almost entirely on entertainment-oriented videos or songs streamed on mobile phones. Medium-English proficiency level students invested roughly double that amount of time and began to supplement entertainment with purpose-built tools-online dictionaries, learning websites, and a modest uptake of apps. High-English proficiency level students, by contrast, treated extramural learning as a sustained practice: the majority logged several hours a week, split time across multiple devices, and preferred structured, output-oriented resources such as language apps and online courses.

A similar progression was evident in communication platforms. Students at the lower end confined interaction to familiar domestic apps like WeChat or QQ, whereas high-English proficiency proficiency peers gravitated toward global, real-time channels such as Zoom and Skype-platforms that demand more fluent, spontaneous output. Taken together, the data trace a clear developmental trajectory: as proficiency rises, students move from brief, passive exposure toward longer, more diversified and interactive engagement with English beyond the classroom.

2. Results for research objective 2: To investigate the perceptions and motivations of Chinese high school students with different English proficiency levels regarding extramural English learning.
Table 3 reveals the views of Chinese high school students with different English proficiency levels on Extramural activities. Thematic analysis was displayed in Table 4.

Table 3

Views of Chinese High School Students with Different English Proficiency Levels on Extramural Activities

Views about extramural activities	Level of Agreement	Low-Level Group	Medium-Level Group	High-Level Group
1. Extramural English activities have helped improve your English learning methods	Strongly Agree	6 (27.27%)	32 (26.89%)	40 (78.43%)
	Agree	3 (13.64%)	35 (29.41%)	7 (13.73%)
	Uncertain	8 (36.36%)	37 (31.09%)	3 (5.88%)
	Disagree	2 (9.09%)	9 (7.56%)	1 (1.96%)
	Strongly disagree	3 (13.64%)	6 (5.04%)	0 (0%)
2. Extramural English learning has improved your English grades	Strongly Agree	2 (9.09%)	31 (26.05%)	40 (78.43%)
	Agree	2 (9.09%)	30 (25.21%)	4 (7.84%)
	Uncertain	1 (4.55%)	25 (21.01%)	3 (5.88%)
	Disagree	7 (31.82%)	15 (12.61%)	2 (3.92%)
	Strongly disagree	10 (45.45%)	18 (15.13%)	2 (3.92%)
3. Extramural English learning enhanced your motivation to learn English	Strongly Agree	2 (9.09%)	31 (26.05%)	40 (78.43%)
	Agree	2 (9.09%)	30 (25.21%)	4 (7.84%)
	Uncertain	1 (4.55%)	25 (21.01%)	3 (5.88%)
	Disagree	7 (31.82%)	15 (12.61%)	2 (3.92%)
	Strongly disagree	10 (45.45%)	18 (15.13%)	2 (3.92%)
4. Extramural learning helps to enhance your confidence in learning English	Strongly Agree	3 (13.64%)	30 (25.21%)	40 (78.43%)
	Agree	3 (13.64%)	36 (30.25%)	5 (9.80%)
	Uncertain	1 (4.55%)	44 (36.97%)	2 (3.92%)
	Disagree	7 (31.82%)	6 (5.04%)	3 (5.88%)
	Strongly disagree	8 (36.36%)	3 (2.52%)	1 (1.96%)
5. Your willingness to continue increasing your extramural study time to improve your English proficiency	Strongly Agree	3 (13.64%)	33 (27.73%)	40 (78.43%)
	Agree	2 (9.09%)	30 (25.21%)	5 (9.80%)
	Uncertain	4 (18.18%)	48 (40.34%)	3 (5.88%)
	Disagree	6 (27.27%)	4 (3.36%)	2 (3.92%)
	Strongly disagree	7 (31.82%)	4 (3.36%)	1 (1.96%)

Student perceptions of extramural English learning showed notable differences across proficiency levels. High-level students overwhelmingly recognized the benefits, with over 78% strongly agreeing that these activities enhanced their learning methods, academic performance, motivation, and confidence. This suggests a reinforcing cycle where higher proficiency encourages greater engagement and positive outcomes. In contrast, low-level students were more doubtful; nearly half strongly disagreed that extramural learning improved their grades or motivation, and many were uncertain about dedicating more time to such activities. This may be due to comprehension difficulties, lower self-efficacy, or a mismatch between the activities and their skill level. Medium-level students displayed a mixed response, with some

beginning to appreciate the value of autonomous learning while others remained hesitant. Overall, the results indicate a clear correlation between English proficiency and perceived benefits of extramural learning, emphasizing the importance of adapting strategies and providing appropriate support to lower-level learners to help bridge this gap.

Table 4

Theme Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews

Key coding words	Categories	Themes
Watching English movies with subtitles Listening to English songs Playing English games	Learning through entertainment (9 or 52.9%)	Favourite extramural learning methods used
Reading English novels Reading English magazines and news Reading English comics	Learning through reading (5 or 29.4%)	
Participating in English corners Taking part in English drama performances Group activities with foreign teachers	Social interaction activities (3 or 17.6%)	
	17(100%)	
Immersive learning through summer camps One-on-one practice with an English tutor	Effective methods for improving listening and speaking skills (3 or 16.7%)	Opinions on extramural learning activities
Participating in English debate competitions	Effective methods to enhance comprehensive expression and critical thinking abilities (2 or 11.1%)	
Recite English song lyrics Imitate English movie lines and memorize them Play English version games	Effective methods for improving reading and writing skills (8 or 44.4%)	
Using Duolingo to improve grammar skills Watching English learning channels Practicing intensive listening with TED Talks	Digital tools can effectively assist learning (5 or 27.8%)	
	18（100%）	

Interview coding shows a clear hierarchy in how students approach extramural English. For favourite extramural learning methods used, learning through entertainment account for 52.9%. Enjoyment, such as watching subtitled films, listening to songs, or gaming, remains the primary entry point for informal learning. A smaller but still substantial group (29.4%) prefers reading-oriented activities (novels, magazines, comics), suggesting that print input is the next most attractive option once basic interest is established. Face-to-face social interaction-English corners, drama, or group work with foreign teachers-comes third, valued by roughly one student in six.

When asked which activities most effectively build specific skills, students again organized their experiences along functional lines. Immersive contexts such as summer camps or one-to-one tutoring were singled out for improving listening and speaking, while debate contests were viewed as the best route to critical thinking and comprehensive expression. For reading and writing, many cited text-based memorization strategies (e.g., reciting song lyrics or imitating film dialogue). Finally, about a quarter of respondents highlighted digital tools-Duolingo, YouTube learning channels, TED Talks-as efficient supplements rather than primary modes. Together, these patterns paint a picture of learners moving from low-pressure entertainment toward progressively more demanding and skill-specific practices as their confidence and needs grow.

Discussion

This study shows Chinese high school students engage in various extramural English activities, with clear differences by their English proficiency level. Watching English movies and TV remains most popular, while interactive activities like English corners and online communication have low participation. Mid-level students exhibit mixed patterns, suggesting a transitional learning phase.

Socioeconomic and technological factors may limit access to interactive resources, especially for lower-English proficiency level learners who also face confidence issues. High- English proficiency students report greater benefits in learning strategies, motivation, and confidence, while lower-English proficiency level students struggle with comprehension and independent learning. Interviews confirm high-English proficiency level students actively use diverse resources and engage confidently, whereas low-English proficiency level students are more hesitant.

These findings suggest educators should promote interactive, communicative activities and improve access to digital tools, alongside providing structured support to boost motivation and self-efficacy. However, the study is limited by its focus on one school and reliance on self-reports, which may affect generalizability and accuracy. Future research should include broader samples and longitudinal data.

Recommendation

To optimize extramural English learning, all stakeholders must take responsibility-and establish clear mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Schools should enrich activity content by offering diverse programs such as English corners, drama performances, and debates, and improve activity quality through professional guidance. To evaluate success, they can track student participation rates, collect regular feedback, and monitor progress using formative assessments or English performance indicators.

Policymakers should promote equitable access to learning resources, support cross-cultural exchange programs, and develop balanced study schedules that encourage participation without adding academic stress. Their interventions can be evaluated through large-scale surveys, school-level outcome tracking, and program review reports.

Extramural training institutions need to provide interactive, level-specific courses such as movie dubbing or gamified speaking tasks, and integrate AI-assisted learning platforms. Evaluation can include pre- and post-course language assessments, learner satisfaction ratings, and retention or improvement in key skills.

Parents play a vital supporting role by encouraging engagement, providing quality resources, and creating English-friendly environments at home. Their influence can be assessed through student reflections, parent-teacher discussions, and changes in learners' motivation and confidence levels.

Students should take initiative by engaging actively, selecting appropriate tools, and maintaining long-term interest through enjoyable methods like English movies and podcasts. Their progress can be evaluated using self-monitoring tools such as learning journals, goal-tracking apps, or teacher feedback.

Through coordinated action and continuous evaluation, these stakeholders can together enhance the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and sustainability of extramural English learning.

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Bridging Political and Academic Discourse: A Pedagogical Framework for Teaching Textual Grammatical Metaphors

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Abstract

This study examines textual grammatical metaphors in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address through Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to develop a pedagogical framework for teaching advanced academic writing. Using qualitative discourse analysis based on Thompson's (2004) framework, we identify and categorise 67 instances of textual grammatical metaphors, revealing how they construct binary worldviews, establish collective identity, and create temporal framing. We then demonstrate how these patterns can be transformed into explicit teaching materials for academic writing instruction. The study presents a four-stage pedagogical approach that uses accessible political texts to scaffold students' understanding of complex textual organisation. Pilot implementation suggestions show how instructors can guide students from recognising these patterns in political discourse to producing appropriate academic texts. The research bridges discourse analysis and writing pedagogy, providing concrete strategies for enhancing students' textual coherence and rhetorical effectiveness.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics, grammatical metaphors, textual grammatical metaphors, political discourse, inaugural address

Introduction

Political discourse, particularly presidential inaugural addresses, has long attracted linguistic researchers due to its sophisticated language and persuasive rhetorical power (Sowińska, 2013) . Previous research on political discourse has predominantly focused on ideational and interpersonal aspects, as illustrated in studies by Kazemian and Hashemi (2014) and Martin and Maton (2017). However, the textual metafunction – which involves organising information and ensuring coherence – has received comparatively less scholarly attention, despite its crucial role in guiding audience comprehension (Thompson, 2014).

In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as developed by Halliday (1985, 1994) and further expanded by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), textual grammatical metaphors are non- typical grammatical constructions employed strategically to structure discourse, establish connections between ideas, and subtly guide audience interpretation (Martin, 1992; Thompson, 2014). Understanding how textual grammatical metaphors function in political discourse can not only deepen our insights into rhetorical strategies but also provide valuable implications for academic writing

pedagogy – an area frequently lacking explicit guidance regarding textual organisation and coherence strategies (Wingate, 2012).

The intersection of political discourse analysis and academic writing pedagogy offers unique opportunities for teaching complex linguistic concepts. Political speeches, particularly those as widely discussed as Trump's inaugural address, provide accessible entry points for students to understand sophisticated textual organisation before applying these concepts to academic writing. This dual analytical-pedagogical approach addresses a critical gap in writing instruction: while students often struggle with textual coherence, traditional teaching materials rarely demonstrate how expert writers actually construct logical relationships beyond simple conjunctions.

For instance, Trump's statement *"Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength"* uses the verb *lead to* to express a causal relationship that could be more congruently expressed as *"Because we protect ourselves, we will become prosperous and strong*." This transformation from a conjunction (*because*) to a verbal process (*lead to*) exemplifies how textual grammatical metaphors package logical relationships in more rhetorically powerful ways.

Objectives

This study analyses President Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address, as the speech shows a distinctive linguistic style characterised by seemingly simple vocabulary yet sophisticated textual organisation and powerful rhetorical impact (Schoor, 2015). Therefore, this research aims to identify specific rhetorical strategies used to structure information, enhance cohesion, and achieve persuasive effects by delving deeply into how textual grammatical metaphors were exploited. Furthermore, this analysis offers significant pedagogical implications for improving academic writing instruction at the tertiary level.

In order to achieve such aims, this study seeks to answer two main research questions:

1. How are textual grammatical metaphors deployed in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address, and what rhetorical functions do they serve?

2. What implications do these findings have for teaching academic writing at the tertiary level?

Therefore, this research functions as a practical bridge between theoretical gaps related to textual grammatical metaphor in political discourse analysis and approaches to improve the teaching of academic writing for university students.

Literature Review
Systemic Functional Linguistics and Grammatical Metaphor

SFL conceptualises language as a system of choices for making meaning within specific social contexts. Central to SFL is the understanding that language simultaneously performs three metafunctions: ideational (representing experience), interpersonal (enacting social relationships), and textual (organising discourse into coherent texts). Within this framework, grammatical metaphor emerges as a significant concept that addresses how meanings can be expressed through non-congruent grammatical realisations.

Grammatical metaphor, unlike lexical metaphor which operates at the level of word meaning, functions at the level of grammatical organisation. Halliday (1985, p. 321) defines grammatical metaphor as "a variation in the expression of a given meaning, rather than a variation in the meaning itself". In simpler terms, grammatical metaphor involves expressing one type of meaning through grammar typically used for another type. This differs from familiar lexical metaphors (like "*time is money*") by operating at the grammatical rather than word level. This variation involves expressing meanings through grammatical structures that evolved to express different kinds of meanings. For instance, processes typically realised through verbs (e.g., *they decided*) may be reconstrued as entities through nominalisation (e.g., *their decision*).

While ideational grammatical metaphor, particularly nominalisation, has received extensive scholarly attention (Halliday & Martin, 1993; Liardét, 2016; Schleppegrell, 2004) , textual grammatical metaphor has remained relatively underexplored. As Thompson (2004, p. 230) defines it, textual grammatical metaphor involves "the expression of logical relations between elements of discourse in forms which evolved to express other kinds of meaning." In other words, conjunctive relationships typically expressed through conjunctions may be realised through other grammatical resources such as verbs, nouns, or prepositional phrases.

Ravelli (2003) identified several common patterns of textual metaphor, including:

1. The expression of conjunction through verbs (e.g., "*X results in Y*" instead of "*Because X, Y*")

2. The expression of conjunction through nouns (e.g., "*The consequence of X is Y*" instead of "*Because X, Y*")

3. The expression of conjunction through prepositional phrases (e.g., "*As a result of X, Y occurs*" instead of "*Because X, Y*")

These patterns, while identified in academic contexts, appear across various discourse types, suggesting their value as transferable concepts in writing instruction.

Earlier, Martin (1992) developed the concept of textual metaphor through his work on discourse semantics, particularly in his analysis of conjunction and logical relations. He demonstrated how textual metaphors reconfigure the logico-semantic relationships between clauses, often through nominalisation, allowing writers to establish more complex relationships between ideas. Martin and Rose (2003) expanded this framework, examining how textual metaphor contributes to the construction of coherent discourse and manages information flow across extended texts.

Hood (2010) focused specifically on textual metaphor in academic writing, arguing that it enables writers to create more sophisticated logical relationships between concepts than is possible with simple conjunctive relations. Her research revealed how textual metaphors function in academic research articles to establish complex relationships between the writer's research and existing literature while constructing evaluative stance. Recent research has further explored these patterns in second language contexts. Byrnes (2009) traces the longitudinal development of grammatical metaphor in L2 German writing curricula, demonstrating how learners progressively develop control of these features over time. Similarly, research on L2 English writing shows that grammatical metaphor represents a crucial threshold for advanced proficiency (Yasuda, 2019).

From a pedagogical perspective, these patterns present both challenges and opportunities. While students need to master these forms for academic success, the abstract nature of grammatical metaphor makes direct teaching difficult. This suggests the value of using more accessible texts - such as political speeches - as stepping stones to academic discourse.

SFL research establishes grammatical metaphor as crucial for advanced literacy. Yet most studies examine ideational rather than textual grammatical metaphor. This gap is particularly noticeable in political discourse studies, where textual organisation plays a crucial role in rhetorical effectiveness. Despite extensive research on grammatical metaphor in academic contexts, the intersection of political discourse analysis and writing pedagogy remains unexplored. Therefore, Trump's inaugural address presents a unique opportunity: its apparent simplicity masks sophisticated textual organisation that could serve as an accessible entry point for teaching complex academic writing strategies. This pedagogical potential has not been examined in existing literature.

As afore-discussed, the intersection of these two areas - textual grammatical metaphor and political discourse - reveals untapped pedagogical potential. While researchers have examined these domains separately, few have considered how insights from one can inform teaching in the other. Political speeches offer several advantages as teaching materials: they are publicly accessible, culturally relevant, and employ sophisticated textual strategies in relatively short texts. These features make them ideal for introducing complex linguistic concepts before students encounter them in lengthier, more specialised academic texts. The following section examines how textual grammatical metaphors function in political discourse, with particular attention to their pedagogical applications.

Textual Grammatical Metaphor in Political Discourse

Political discourse represents a rich domain for studying textual grammatical metaphors due to its inherently persuasive nature and the significant role logical relations play in constructing political arguments. As Fairclough (2000, 2003) demonstrates, the way political texts organise information and establish connections between ideas often serves ideological purposes, naturalising particular perspectives and framing contested issues in ways that support specific political positions.

The concept of textual grammatical metaphor has been implicitly addressed in political discourse studies through examinations of cohesion, logical relations, and information structure, though rarely using SFL terminology explicitly. Van Dijk's (2006) work on political discourse highlights how the strategic organisation of information contributes to ideological positioning – a critical thinking skill that students can develop through analysing political texts before applying similar analytical frameworks to academic sources. On the other hand, Wodak's (2015) discourse-historical approach examines how temporal and causal relations are constructed in political texts to legitimise policies and actions.

Within the SFL tradition, studies explicitly addressing textual grammatical metaphor in political discourse have remained limited. Young (2011) analyses cohesive devices in political speeches, including metaphorical expressions of logical relations, showing how these contribute to persuasive effect and help naturalise contested political positions. Liu and Gao (2010) examine logical connectives in Chinese EFL

learners' argumentative writing, finding that metaphorical expressions of causality and consequence were particularly common in sections outlining policy agendas.

Regarding inaugural addresses specifically, Sowińska (2013) analyses their genre characteristics, noting that these speeches typically blend ceremonial and deliberative rhetoric while establishing temporal frameworks that connect past, present, and future. Campbell and Jamieson (2008) identify recurring rhetorical patterns in inaugural addresses, including the establishment of collective identity and the articulation of political principles, both of which depend heavily on effective textual organisation.

Trump's rhetoric specifically has attracted substantial scholarly attention for its distinctive stylistic and organisational features. Montgomery (2017) examines Trump's inaugural address from a discourse-analytical perspective, noting its departure from conventional presidential rhetoric in terms of simplicity, directness, and populist framing. Schoor (2015) discusses Trump's populist discourse strategies, observing how his speeches construct binary worldviews and establish collective identity through strategic textual organisation.

However, these studies of Trump's rhetoric have not focused specifically on textual grammatical metaphor as a central analytical concept. The rhetorical strategies employed in political discourse, while serving different purposes than academic writing, utilise similar grammatical resources. This parallel offer pedagogical potential: students can first identify these patterns in engaging political texts before learning to adapt them for academic purposes. This represents a significant gap in the literature, as understanding how Trump's rhetorically effective speech deploys textual grammatical metaphors could provide valuable insights into both political discourse analysis and academic writing instruction.

Academic Writing Pedagogy and Grammatical Metaphor

Academic writing pedagogy at the tertiary level has increasingly recognised the importance of explicitly teaching linguistic resources that contribute to successful academic text production. As Hyland (2007) argues, academic writing involves not just content knowledge but also control of discipline-specific discourse conventions, including the ability to construct coherent arguments through effective textual organisation.

Schleppegrell (2004) demonstrates that academic writing is characterised by high frequencies of grammatical metaphor, which allows for dense information packaging, abstract reasoning, and the construction of technical taxonomies. Christie and Derewianka (2008) trace the development of grammatical metaphor in student writing across grade levels, showing that mastery of grammatical metaphor represents a crucial milestone in advanced literacy development. However, as Liardét (2016) notes, many students, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, struggle to develop control of grammatical metaphor in their academic writing.

Research specifically addressing textual grammatical metaphor in academic writing pedagogy is particularly limited. Ravelli (2003) examines textual metaphor in academic writing, arguing that it enables writers to create more dynamic relationships between concepts than is possible with simple conjunctive relations. Hood (2010) explores how textual metaphor functions in academic research articles, particularly in

introductions, where writers need to establish complex relationships between their research and existing literature.

Several pedagogical approaches have attempted to address grammatical metaphor in academic writing instruction. The Sydney School's genre-based pedagogy, as articulated by Rose and Martin (2012), incorporates attention to grammatical metaphor within a broader focus on genre and register. This approach emphasises explicit teaching of linguistic resources through a teaching-learning cycle that includes deconstruction of model texts, joint construction with teacher guidance, and independent construction by students.

Building on this foundation, recent implementations of SFL-informed pedagogy have demonstrated concrete results in diverse educational contexts. Gebhard and Accurso (2020) examine how SFL principles can be operationalised in educational settings, revealing successful transformations of abstract linguistic concepts into teachable moments through careful scaffolding and contextualisation. More specifically for textual metaphor instruction, Yasuda (2019) demonstrates through a corpus-based study how explicit instruction in grammatical metaphor leads to improvements in EFL students' academic writing quality, particularly in constructing logical arguments and managing information flow. These studies suggest that the theoretical insights of SFL can indeed be operationalised effectively, yet they also point to remaining challenges.

The potential value of using political discourse to teach aspects of academic writing has received limited attention in the literature. Negretti and McGrath (2018) argue for using genre analysis to help students develop rhetorical consciousness, while Miller, Mitchell, and Pessoa (2016) argue how analysis of political texts can develop critical reading skills. However, few studies have specifically leveraged grammatical metaphor analysis of political texts as a pedagogical tool for academic writing instruction.

Despite extensive research on grammatical metaphor in academic contexts, the intersection of political discourse analysis and writing pedagogy remains unexplored. Despite these advances in grammatical metaphor pedagogy, significant gaps remain in how we help students bridge different discourse contexts. While students may struggle with dense academic texts, they often demonstrate sophisticated understanding of persuasive strategies in political discourse—a resource that remains largely untapped in writing instruction.

The intersection of political discourse analysis and writing pedagogy thus represents not merely an unexplored area, but a missed opportunity to leverage students' existing analytical skills. Trump's inaugural address presents a unique opportunity: its apparent simplicity masks sophisticated textual organisation that could serve as an accessible entry point for teaching complex academic writing strategies. By analysing familiar political rhetoric, students can develop meta-linguistic awareness that transfers to academic contexts – yet no existing framework systematically exploits this pedagogical potential.

Trump's inaugural address presents a unique opportunity: its apparent simplicity masks sophisticated textual organisation that could serve as an accessible entry point for teaching complex academic writing strategies. This pedagogical potential has not been examined in existing literature. This gap in the literature points to a significant opportunity. Teaching students to recognise and produce textual

grammatical metaphors could enhance their ability to construct coherent, persuasive academic texts. By analysing how these resources function in political discourse, where the objects of study may be more accessible and engaging for students than specialised academic texts, this study aims to develop pedagogical approaches that can bridge the gap between students' existing linguistic resources and the demands of academic writing.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyse textual grammatical metaphors in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address. The research design combines detailed linguistic analysis with pedagogical application, following Thompson's (2004) framework for identifying textual grammatical metaphor and Martin and Rose's (2003) approach to discourse analysis.

Data Selection and Rationale

To address potential limitations of single-text analysis, this speech was selected as a representative example of contemporary political rhetoric that demonstrates clear textual organisation patterns while remaining accessible to student audiences. The corpus for this study consists of Donald Trump's inaugural address delivered on January 20, 2017. This speech was selected for several reasons:

1. As an inaugural address, it represents a well-defined political genre with established conventions, allowing for systematic analysis of textual features.

2. The speech received significant public and scholarly attention for its distinctive rhetorical style, making it a particularly rich text for linguistic analysis.

3. At approximately 1,450 words, it provides a manageable yet substantive corpus for detailed examination.

4. The speech contains a variety of logical relationships expressed through different grammatical structures, offering ample material for analysing textual grammatical metaphors.

The official transcript of the speech was obtained from the White House archives to ensure textual accuracy. Both the written transcript and video recording were consulted to account for any discrepancies between the prepared text and the delivered speech.

Analytical Framework

The analysis followed a three-stage process designed to systematically identify, categorise, and interpret textual grammatical metaphors in the inaugural address:

Identification of Textual Grammatical Metaphors

Following Thompson's (2004) definition, textual grammatical metaphors were identified as instances where logical relations typically expressed through conjunctions (e.g., *because, but*, *when*) were instead realised through other grammatical structures. For each identified instance, a congruent (non-metaphorical) realisation was constructed to serve as a basis for comparison.

The identification process involved:

1. segmenting the text into clauses and clause complexes;

2. identifying logical relationships between clauses and elements;

3. determining whether these relationships were expressed congruently or metaphorically;

4. constructing congruent alternatives for metaphorical expressions.

For example, the metaphorical expression "*Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength*" was identified as expressing a causal relationship that could congruently be expressed as "*Because we will protect ourselves, we will become prosperous and strong*".

Table 1

Examples of Metaphorical vs Congruent Realisations

Metaphorical Expression	Congruent Alternative	Logical Relation
For too long, a small group has reaped rewards	*Because it has happened for a long time, a small group has reaped rewards*	Temporal-causal
Protection will lead to prosperity	*If we protect ourselves, then we will prosper*	Conditional

These examples illustrate how the agnation test was applied systematically throughout the analysis. The identification process required careful attention to semantic equivalence while recognising the rhetorical differences between metaphorical and congruent forms.

Categorisation of Textual Grammatical Metaphors

Identified textual grammatical metaphors were categorised according to multiple parameters:

1. Grammatical realisation:
   - Prepositional phrases (e.g., "*For too long*")
   - Verbal processes (e.g., "*lead to*")
   - Nominal groups (e.g., "*the consequence*")
   - Enhanced by punctuation/layout (e.g., the use of dashes to reinforce adversative relations)

2. Type of logical relation:
   - Causal (expressing reason, result, purpose)
   - Adversative (expressing contrast, concession)
   - Temporal (expressing time relationships)
   - Additive (expressing addition, alternative)
   - Conditional (expressing conditions, consequences)

3. Position in clause:
   - Theme position (at the beginning of the clause)
   - Rheme position (later in the clause)
   - Embedded (within another element)

Functional Analysis

The functional analysis examined how textual grammatical metaphors contributed to the overall rhetorical effectiveness of the speech, focusing on:

1. how they constructed particular representations of events and relationships;
2. how they managed information flow and thematic development;
3. how they contributed to the persuasive impact of the speech;
4. how they created coherence across the text.

This analysis drew on Martin and Rose's (2003) approach to discourse semantics, examining how textual resources constructed particular meanings in context. Particular attention was paid to how textual grammatical metaphors functioned to naturalise particular perspectives, establish collective identity, and create temporal framing.

Pedagogical Framework Development

Parallel to the linguistic analysis, this study developed a pedagogical framework through the following process:

1. Identifying teachable patterns from the linguistic analysis
2. Developing student-friendly explanations and examples
3. Creating scaffolded activities moving from recognition to production
4. Designing assessment criteria for student mastery

This framework was reviewed by three experienced EAP instructors working in the same tertiary context for clarity and practicality, with revisions made based on their feedback.

Readibility and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of this three-stage analytical process, several measures were implemented. Therefore, 20% of the text was independently coded by a second researcher familiar with SFL so that the analytical consistency can be guaranteed. Inter-rater agreement reached 87% for identification of textual grammatical metaphors and 82% for categorisation of logical relations. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and reference to established SFL literature. The distinction between metaphorical and congruent forms followed Thompson's (2004) agnation test: if a logical relationship could be re-expressed using a simple conjunction while maintaining the same meaning, the original expression was classified as metaphorical.

Results

The analysis of Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address revealed a substantial presence of textual grammatical metaphors throughout the speech, with 67 instances identified in the approximately 1,450-word text. This represents a density of 4.6 textual grammatical metaphors per 100 words, which is notable for a spoken political text, though lower than the typical density in academic writing (Ravelli, 2003; Hood, 2010).

These textual grammatical metaphors were categorised according to both their grammatical realisation and the type of logical relation they express. Table 1 presents the distribution of textual grammatical metaphors by their grammatical realisation. For example, the prepositional phrase *For too long* establishes temporal context metaphorically, whereas a congruent form might be *Because this has continued for many years*. Such prepositional phrases signal temporal-causal logic while maintaining rhetorical force.

Table 2
Distribution of Textual Grammatical Metaphors by Grammatical Realisation

Grammatical Realisation	Frequency	Percentage
Prepositional phrases	28	41.8%
Verbal processes	19	28.4%
Nominal groups	13	19.4%
Enhanced by punctuation/layout	7	10.4%
Total	67	100%

As shown in Table 2, prepositional phrases represented the most common grammatical realisation of textual grammatical metaphors in the address, accounting for 41.8% of all instances. These typically took forms such as *For too long*, *At the bedrock of our politics*, and *With the understanding that*, functioning to establish temporal, foundational, and conditional relationships respectively.

Table 3 presents the distribution of textual grammatical metaphors according to the type of logical relation they express. Causal relations (e.g., *lead to*, *result in*) predominate, reflecting the speech's emphasis on explaining consequences of political choice.:

Table 3
Distribution of Textual Grammatical Metaphors by Logical Relation

Logical Relation	Frequency	Percentage
Causal	24	35.8%
Adversative	16	23.9%
Temporal	14	20.9%
Additive	8	11.9%
Conditional	5	7.5%
Total	67	100%

Causal relations were most frequently expressed through textual grammatical metaphors (35.8%), reflecting the speech's emphasis on explaining current situations and justifying proposed actions. Adversative relations were the second most common (23.9%), often establishing contrasts between the past and future or between different social groups.

Cross-tabulation revealed significant patterns in how different logical relations were typically realised grammatically. Causal relations were most commonly expressed through verbal processes (e.g., *lead to*, *result in*), while temporal relations

were predominantly realised through prepositional phrases (e.g., *For too long*, *From this day forward*).

The distribution of textual grammatical metaphors throughout the speech also revealed strategic patterns. The density was highest in sections articulating policy positions (6.3 per 100 words) and lowest in ceremonial opening and closing sections (3.1 per 100 words). This pattern suggests a strategic deployment of textual grammatical metaphors to construct logical relationships in portions of the speech focused on argumentation and persuasion.

Pedagogical Applications of Findings

The linguistic patterns identified in Trump's inaugural address translate directly into teachable concepts for academic writing instruction. While political discourse and academic writing serve different purposes, the underlying grammatical resources remain similar. The following table demonstrates how instructors can transform each linguistic finding into classroom applications, using political texts as accessible entry points before progressing to academic discourse.

Table 4
Transformation of Linguistic Findings into Teaching Applications

Linguistic Finding	Teaching Application	Sample Activity
Prepositional phrases express temporal-causal relations (41.8%)	Teach students to recognise and use phrases like: *In light of*, *Given that*, *In the context of*	Transform explicit conjunctions in sample texts to prepositional phrases
Causal metaphors dominate (35.8%)	Focus instruction on sophisticated cause-effect expressions	Analyse cause-effect chains in accessible texts before academic ones
Verbal processes for logical relations (28.4%)	Introduce verbs like: *stems from*, *gives rise to*, *results in*	Rewrite simple causal sentences using verbal processes
Adversative relations through punctuation (10.4%)	Demonstrate how dashes, semicolons enhance contrast	Compare punctuation effects in political vs. academic texts

These applications follow a scaffolded approach: students first identify patterns in engaging political texts, analyse their rhetorical effects, then adapt these patterns for academic purposes. For instance, students might begin by identifying Trump's use of "*For too long*" as a temporal-causal metaphor, discuss its rhetorical impact, then practice using academic equivalents like "*Historically*" or "*Over the past decade*" in their own writing.

Discussions

Rhetorical Functions of Textual Grammatical Metaphors

The analysis revealed that textual grammatical metaphors in Trump's inaugural address served several key rhetorical functions: constructing binary worldviews, establishing collective identity, creating temporal framing, naturalising political positions, and managing information flow.

Constructing Binary Worldviews

Textual grammatical metaphors frequently functioned to establish oppositional relationships between entities, constructing a binary worldview characteristic of populist discourse (Schoor, 2015). This function was particularly evident in adversative textual metaphors that contrasted the establishment with the people:

"*Washington flourished — but the people did not share in its wealth."*
"Politicians prospered — but the jobs left, and the factories closed."

In these examples, the adversative relationship is expressed not only through the conjunction "*but*" but is enhanced by the use of dashes, creating a stronger sense of opposition. This combination of conjunction and punctuation functions as a textual grammatical metaphor that dramatises the disconnect between elite prosperity and popular struggle.

Similarly, in the parallel structures "*Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs*," the semicolon functions as a textual grammatical metaphor expressing adversative relation, reinforcing the opposition between "*them*" and "*you*" established lexically.

The binary oppositions created through textual metaphors in Trump's speech offer a clear teaching point. Students can first identify these patterns in political texts, then learn how academic writing transforms simple oppositions into nuanced contrasts. For instance, instead of Trump's stark 'but,' academic writers might use 'while acknowledging X, it is important to note Y' - maintaining contrast while avoiding oversimplification.

Classroom Application: Provide students with political statements using binary metaphors. Have them identify the logical relationship, then rewrite for academic contexts. This progression from recognition in accessible texts to production in academic writing scaffolds the learning process effectively. For example:

- Political: "Washington flourished -- but the people did not share"
- Academic rewrite: "While economic indicators showed growth in the capital region, this prosperity was not equally distributed across all demographic groups"

Establishing Collective Identity

Textual grammatical metaphors also served to construct collective identity, particularly through causal and conditional relationships that linked national allegiance to positive outcomes:

"*At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America, and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other*."

Here, the prepositional phrase " *At the bedrock of our politics*" metaphorically expresses a foundational relationship that might congruently be expressed as "*Because it is fundamentally important for our politics*." This is followed by another textual grammatical metaphor, "*through our loyalty*," which expresses an instrumental causal relationship. These textual grammatical metaphors chain together to create a causal sequence that presents national unity as the natural foundation for social cohesion.

This chaining of textual metaphors demonstrates a sophisticated organisational strategy that students need to master for academic writing. However, where Trump uses these chains to build emotional resonance and collective identity, academic writers use similar structures to build logical arguments and establish theoretical frameworks.

Classroom Application: Present students with examples of metaphorical chains from both political and academic texts. Have them map the logical progression, then practice creating their own chains for different purposes:

- Political purpose: Building group solidarity
- Academic purpose: Establishing theoretical foundations This exercise helps students understand that the same linguistic tools serve different rhetorical purposes across genres.

Creating Temporal Framing

Temporal textual grammatical metaphors played a crucial role in framing the historical significance of the moment and establishing a narrative of national decline and potential renewal:

"*For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost*." "*That all changes — starting right here, and right now*."

The prepositional phrase "*For too long*" functions as a textual grammatical metaphor that establishes a temporal frame for the subsequent proposition, positioning it within a historical context of accumulated grievance. This temporal framing creates a sense of urgency and legitimises the call for change that follows.

Temporal framing through textual metaphors is equally important in academic writing, though it serves different purposes. Where political discourse uses temporal frames to create urgency or historical narrative, academic writing uses them to situate research within scholarly conversations and trace theoretical developments.

Classroom Application: Develop exercises where students transform political temporal framing into academic contexts:

- Political: *For too long, a small group has reaped the rewards*
- Academic: Historically, research in this area has focused predominantly on… Students learn to maintain the temporal relationship while shifting from evaluative to analytical language.

Naturalising Political Positions

Causal textual grammatical metaphors frequently served to present contested political positions as natural, inevitable outcomes:

"*Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.*" "*When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.*"

In the first example, the material process "*lead to*" expresses a causal relationship that might congruently be expressed as "*If we protect ourselves, then we will become greatly prosperous and strong.*" This metaphorical realisation construes causality as a journey or movement, with one entity leading to another, rather than as a conditional relationship between propositions. This presentation of causality as a natural process rather than a contested claim serves to naturalise the protectionist policy position.

The naturalisation of contested positions through causal metaphors presents both a teaching opportunity and a critical thinking exercise. Students must learn to recognise when causal relationships are presented as inevitable versus when they represent one possible interpretation among many.

Classroom Application: Create exercises that move students through three stages:

1. **Recognition:** Identify naturalized causality in political texts

2. **Analysis:** Unpack the assumptions embedded in these causal claims

3. **Academic reconstruction:** Rewrite to acknowledge multiple perspectives Example transformation:

- Political: "Protection will lead to great prosperity"

- Academic: "Some economic theories suggest that protectionist policies may contribute to domestic growth, though this relationship remains contested in the literature"

Limitations and Critical Considerations

While this analysis reveals strategic patterns, we must acknowledge the risk of over-interpreting intentionality. Textual grammatical metaphors may result from speechwriting conventions or rhetorical habits rather than conscious strategic choices. Additionally, the binary worldview constructed through these metaphors, while rhetorically effective, presents a simplified reality that academic writing typically seeks to complicate rather than reduce. These limitations align with broader concerns in critical discourse studies. As Flowerdew and Richardson (2017) note in their handbook, the interpretation of rhetorical strategies must always acknowledge the complex interplay between authorial intention, genre conventions, and audience reception.

Connections to Student Writing Challenges

Students often struggle with similar textual organisation issues, particularly L2 writers who may rely heavily on simple conjunctions. Common errors include:

- Overuse of explicit conjunctions creating choppy prose

- Inability to express complex logical relationships beyond *because* and *but*

- Difficulty managing information flow across extended arguments

Understanding how political discourse employs textual metaphors can help students recognise these resources in academic texts and develop strategies for incorporating them appropriately.

A Four-Stage Pedagogical Framework

The linguistic patterns identified in this study can be systematically taught through a four-stage framework that progresses from recognition to production. This framework addresses the challenge of making abstract grammatical concepts concrete and learnable.

Stage 1: Recognition in Political Texts

In this foundational stage, students develop awareness of textual metaphors through accessible materials:

- Students identify textual metaphors in engaging political speeches using colour-coding systems (blue for causal, red for adversative, green for temporal)
- Compare metaphorical and congruent forms side-by-side using parallel columns
- Complete guided worksheets that highlight specific patterns from Trump's speech

Sample Activity: Present the excerpt "*Washington flourished … but the people did not share in its wealth.*" Students identify the adversative relationship, discuss how the dash intensifies the contrast, then find three similar examples in the text.

Stage 2: Analysis of Functions

Students move beyond identification to understanding rhetorical purposes:

- Examine why speakers choose metaphorical over congruent forms through group discussions
- Analyse rhetorical effects on different audiences using role-play exercises
- Develop critical awareness of how grammatical choices shape meaning

Sample Activity: Students compare "*Protection will lead to prosperity*" with "*If we protect ourselves, we might prosper.*" They discuss certainty levels, persuasive impact, and hidden assumptions in small groups.

Stage 3: Transition to Academic Texts

This crucial stage bridges political and academic discourse:

- Compare political and academic uses of similar metaphors using parallel texts
- Identify discipline-specific preferences through corpus examples
- Practice appropriate adaptations through guided rewriting exercises

Sample Activity: Transform political metaphors into academic register:

- Political: "*For too long, researchers have ignored this problem*"
- Academic: "*Historically, scholarly attention to this issue has been limited*"

Stage 4: Production and Peer Review

Students apply their learning in authentic writing tasks:
- Produce 500-word argumentative texts incorporating textual metaphors
- Conduct peer reviews using rubrics focused on logical coherence
- Revise drafts emphasising academic appropriateness

Assessment Rubric includes:

- Appropriate use of causal metaphors (25%)
- Effective adversative relationships (25%)
- Logical coherence and flow (25%)
- Academic register maintenance (25%)

Implementation Challenges and Solutions

Instructors implementing these approaches may face several challenges:

- **Instructor expertise**: Not all writing teachers have SFL training. Solution: Provide simplified frameworks focusing on logical relationships rather than full SFL terminology.

- **Student readiness**: Students with lower proficiency may struggle with metaphorical expressions. Solution: Scaffold instruction through guided practice, moving from identifying simple patterns to producing complex ones.

- **Transfer difficulties**: Students may overuse political rhetorical strategies in academic contexts. Solution: Explicitly contrast appropriate strategies for different genres through comparative analysis.

Implementation Considerations

While the four-stage framework provides structure, successful implementation requires attention to practical constraints and opportunities.

Pilot Implementation Insights

Preliminary discussions with writing instructors at three tertiary institutions suggest several considerations for implementation:

- **Time allocation:** The four-stage framework requires approximately 4-6 class hours, ideally spread across 2-3 weeks to allow for practice between sessions. In our context, this framework can be extended to 9-week courses as our university offers students with this time-framed course for academic writing.

- **Materials development:** Instructors need curated examples from both political and academic texts. A shared repository of analysed speeches and parallel academic texts would reduce preparation time.

- **Assessment integration:** Textual metaphor recognition and production can be incorporated into existing rubrics without creating additional assessment burden

- **Student readiness:** International students may need additional scaffolding in Stage 1, particularly for understanding cultural references in political speeches

Adaptation for Different Contexts

The framework's flexibility allows for various implementations:

- **Intensive format:** Compress into a two-day workshop for advanced students

- **Extended format:** Spread across a full semester, integrating with other writing skills

- **Discipline-specific focus:** Adapt Stage 3 examples to match students' fields of study

This flexibility aligns with current best practices in L2 writing pedagogy. As research on advanced L2 proficiency demonstrates, successful grammatical metaphor instruction must be responsive to students' developmental stages and disciplinary contexts (see Byrnes, 2009; Yasuda, 2019).

Conclusion

This study contributes to both discourse analysis and writing pedagogy by demonstrating how linguistic insights can be transformed into concrete teaching practices. The analysis reveals sophisticated patterns of textual organisation in political discourse, specifically identifying 67 instances of textual grammatical metaphors that serve to construct binary worldviews, establish collective identity, and naturalise political positions.

The pedagogical framework developed from these findings shows how these patterns can enhance academic writing instruction through a systematic four-stage progression. By using engaging political texts as stepping stones to academic discourse, instructors can make abstract linguistic concepts accessible and applicable. This bridging approach addresses the persistent challenge of teaching textual coherence while providing students with transferable skills for constructing logical arguments across genres.

The study's dual contribution lies not only in advancing our understanding of textual metaphor in political discourse but also in providing a replicable model for transforming linguistic analysis into pedagogical practice. Future research should empirically test this framework across different student populations and explore its application to other accessible genres such as TED talks, opinion editorials, and social media discourse.

For the field of ELT, this study demonstrates that the apparent gap between engaging, culturally relevant materials and sophisticated linguistic instruction is bridgeable. As recent scholarship in SFL pedagogy suggests (Gebhard & Accurso, 2020; Yasuda, 2019), the transformation of SFL theory into classroom practice represents a crucial direction for writing pedagogy. In an era where students must navigate multiple discourse communities, the ability to recognise and adapt textual patterns across genres becomes not just an academic skill but a crucial literacy for participation in public and professional life.

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Exploring the Effectiveness of Podcasts in University English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Podcasts as new forms of information technology, have led to gradual and radical changes in the field of education, especially in the last decade. Advanced technologies continue to promote educational activities beyond the university classroom. They are supported by experts in the field of linguodidactics and methods of teaching foreign languages: didactic materials are created with links to Internet resources and assignments involving work with online material. The teacher of foreign languages has to keep up with the times, organize the educational process, using advanced technologies of the global Internet, to achieve the main learning goal: teaching English to university students. Nowadays, podcasts are being discussed as a new promising e-learning tool, the didactic potential of which can change the learning process, as geographical and temporal boundaries of information dissemination and receipt are erased, which is very important for digital pedagogy in the 21st century. This allows us to speak about the relevance of this research topic. The use of innovative means of teaching English to university students at the present stage makes the learning process more effective. This article examines the possibilities of podcasts as a means of teaching listening comprehension skills to university students a n d presents the students' practical results. The article displays the results of an experiment on teaching students listening skills using experimental and control groups.

Introduction

From a historical point of view, podcasting appeared relatively recently – around 2004. Its creators Dave Winer and Adam Curry are the inventors of a way to upload files (audio and video) using the RSS (Rich Site Summary) format to describe news feeds, as well as other content. The term podcast comes from iPod and broadcast. The iPod music player and the broadcast have formed a podcast.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003) defines *podcast* as "a radio programme that is stored in a digital form that you can download from the internet and play on a computer or on a mobile Phone".

In Reverso Context (2013) '*podcast*' is: noun – 1. (media) series of digital episodes that can be streamed; 2. (media file) digital audio or video file available for download; verb – 1. (technology) create audio files for internet distribution; 2. (deliver) deliver audio content regularly over the Internet.

Merriam-Webster (2022): Podcast: a program (as music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet.

Wiktionary, the free dictionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/podcast) gives short information about the origin of the term: Blend iPod ("portable music layer made by Apple") + broadcast, probably coined by the British technologist and broadcaster Ben Hammersley (born 1976) who proposed word podcasting in 2004.

Noun: *podcast* (plural podcasts) – 1. Program, especially an audio program, produced on a regular basis, delivered over the Internet in a compressed digital format and designed for playback on computers or portable devices such as mobile phones. In precise usage, the term podcast refers to the program itself, whereas each individual audio recording is referred to as an episode; in broad usage, metonymy blurs this distinction (as it also does with analogous terms such as broadcast and television show). Verb: 1. To deliver (information) in the form of a program, especially an audio program, over the Internet on a regular basis for playback on computers or portable devices such as mobile phones.

The forms of podcasts are diverse: interview, discussion, video and audio, dialogue, monologue, educational video, and story. The topics of podcasts are also diverse, they can be research and narrative, entertaining and educational. The duration of a podcast is from 15 minutes to an hour or even more.

There is a gap in research regarding the use of podcasting in teaching university students to perceive foreign speech by ear.

Podcasts, as a relatively new educational tool, attracts university students. As a result, the study below presents the effect on university students' listening skills.

Research Objective

The purpose of the research is to study the possibilities of podcasting technology in teaching listening comprehension skills to university students.

The set goal led to the following tasks:

- consideration of the effect of podcasts on listening skills;

- research of the didactic potential of podcasts in teaching listening comprehension skills to university students;

- analysis of university students' listening comprehension skills in the process of working with podcasts (test scores).

Research Methodology

Research Design

This article uses a research approach to show the features of using podcast technology in teaching foreign languages at a university. The action research aims to highlight some details of the use of podcasts in the process of teaching foreign languages (listening comprehension skills in particular) and to provide a visual representation of this process. The research includes the definition of the problem (the students' involvement, the effectiveness/non-effectiveness of the syllabus), data collection (interviews, observations), strategy implementation (changes aimed at solving a problem), evaluation and refinement (additional data collection and reflection), and correction and improvement.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the Biysk branch of the Altai State Pedagogical University. The study involved students from a full-time university department, totaling of 40 students (age – from 19 to 21, level – from low-intermediate to intermediate) and two members of the teaching staff. The students were divided into two groups: experimental and control. The students in the experimental group actively used podcasts in their class and out-of-class activities. The students in the control group performed traditional tasks given in the textbooks and used standard audio and video materials. The initiator of the study was a young teacher of Chinese and English, who, after completing her bachelor's degree, continues her studies at the university's graduate school and is engaged in teaching. Her teaching experience at the university is three years. The second teacher, who has extensive experience in teaching foreign languages, has just started using podcast technology in her teaching activities. At the Biysk branch of AltSPU named after V. M. Shukshin teachers encountered a common problem typical of teaching Chinese and English, i.e., the lack of effectiveness of traditional methods in developing communication skills, especially listening and speaking.

Despite the growing popularity of Chinese and English, textbooks and standard audio materials often do not provide a complete immersion in a live language environment. They do not allow students to get used to the natural speech of native speakers and limit the expansion of their vocabulary to current, modern vocabulary and idioms.

This problem was particularly acute in the Practice of Oral and Written Speech discipline, where students often experienced difficulties in understanding authentic speech and expressing their thoughts freely.

In search of innovative methods teachers decided to try to integrate podcasts into the educational process. This solution seems promising, as it provides a number of advantages that significantly improve the quality of students' training.

Unlike standard educational materials, podcasts provide students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the language environment independently and easily. They allow you to listen to the natural speech of native speakers, get acquainted with a variety of topics, speech styles and current vocabulary, including phraseological units and idioms that are rarely found in textbooks.

Research Tools

The following research tools used in this study are: interviews, observation, and surveys (Likert scale), listening tasks, and language tests. In the process of using podcast technology, systematic monitoring of students in the classroom was carried out. The observation was objective, continuous, non-inclusive, and generalized. Before and after using podcast technology in the classroom, a survey of students was conducted to determine their attitude toward this technology.

The methodology of listening training was developed by Sysoev (2012) and can be used with podcasts. It consists of three stages:

- before listening;
- while listening;
- after listening.

Exercises which can be used in the experiment according to this formula:

Before listening

After students are given a list of words, they translate them, then work in pairs and test their knowledge of the words using flashcards. This interactive and engaging method of vocabulary practice not only helps students to remember the meaning of the words, but also allows them to actively engage with the material and incorporate it into their long-term memory. By working in pairs, students have the opportunity to discuss and clarify any uncertainties they may have, further solidifying their understanding of the vocabulary.

Additionally, using flashcards as a tool for testing their knowledge encourages students to actively recall the information, which has been shown to be a more effective way of learning compared to simply passive studying. This method also promotes a sense of competition and motivation among students, as they strive to remember the meanings of the words and beat their partner in the flashcard game.

Furthermore, working in pairs fosters collaboration and communication skills, as students must effectively communicate with each other to test their knowledge and discuss any challenges they may encounter. This not only enhances their understanding of the vocabulary words, but also helps them develop important social skills that are essential for success in both academic and professional settings.

Overall, this method of vocabulary practice not only improves students' retention of the material, but also promotes collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills essential for their academic and personal growth.

While listening

Listening to podcasts with gaps in the text is an engaging and interactive way for students to improve their listening skills and enhance their comprehension abilities. By actively participating in filling in the missing information, students are not only honing their listening skills, but also practicing their critical thinking and inference abilities.

This activity can be particularly beneficial for language learners, as it provides them with the opportunity to expose themselves to authentic language in a controlled and structured way. By listening to native speakers and trying to fill in the gaps, students can improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall language proficiency.

Furthermore, filling in the gaps in a podcast can also help students develop their note-taking skills. As they listen attentively to the audio and try to capture the missing information, they are practicing important academic skills that can be valuable in a variety of contexts.

Overall, using podcasts with gaps in the text is a dynamic and effective way to engage students in their language learning journey. It allows them to actively participate in their learning process, while also providing them with valuable opportunities to improve their listening comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

After listening

After being provided with the list of words used in the podcast, students are tasked with not only recalling the words themselves, but also the specific context in which they were used. This exercise not only challenges students to remember the vocabulary they have encountered, but also encourages them to critically think about how the words were utilized in the conversation. By recalling the context in which the words were used, students are able to deepen their understanding of the language and its nuances.

Furthermore, this activity promotes active listening skills as students must pay close attention to the podcast in order to accurately remember the context in which the words were used. It also serves as a valuable tool for improving comprehension and retention of new vocabulary. By engaging with the material in this way, students are able to make meaningful connections between the words they are learning and their real-world applications.

In addition, reflecting on the context in which words are used can provide insight into the broader themes and ideas presented in the podcast. This exercise encourages students to think critically about the content they are consuming and can lead to more meaningful discussions and analysis. Overall, by challenging students to recollect the context in which words are used, this activity not only strengthens their language skills but also enhances their overall comprehension and engagement with the material.

Data Collection

Before collecting the data, the students were informed that they would be interviewed and monitored. The data collection process included pre-class surveillance without podcast technology, classroom surveillance using podcasts, and data decoding and organization. There was a significant difference in the degree of activity and interest of students in the studied educational material without the use of podcasts and with their use.

Data Analysis

After conducting a series of lessons with podcasts, the teachers interviewed the students of the experimental group about the importance\uselessness of using this technology. The question was:

What aspect do you find most important when listening to a podcast in a foreign language?

The students' answers were:

1. Auditor's authentic speech

When listening to a podcast in a foreign language, 15% of AltSPU students believe that the authenticity of the speaker is crucial. This means that they value hearing a genuine, natural speech that reflects the nuances and rhythm of the language being spoken. An authentic speaker can provide valuable insight into the culture and language, making the listening experience more engaging and immersive.

For these students, the speaker's tone, intonation, and pronunciation are key factors in their enjoyment of the podcast. They appreciate when the speaker sounds like a native speaker, as it helps them better understand the language and improve their own pronunciation. Authentic speech can also make the content more relatable and easier to follow, as the listener feels more connected to the speaker.

Furthermore, an authentic speaker can convey emotions and nuances that may be lost in a more formal or robotic speech. This can make the podcast more interesting and dynamic, keeping the listener engaged throughout the episode. Additionally, hearing authentic speech can help students develop their listening skills and improve their comprehension of the language.

In conclusion, the authenticity of the speaker plays a significant role in how students perceive and engage with podcasts in a foreign language. By prioritizing authentic speech, students can enhance their language learning experience and make the most out of their listening practice.

2. Articulate speech

Listening to podcasts in a foreign language can be a challenging yet rewarding experience for many students. According to the results of the interview, 30% of AltSPU students believe that the articulate speech of the podcast host is the most crucial aspect when trying to understand and learn from the content. This finding highlights the importance of clear pronunciation, enunciation, and overall communication skills in effectively conveying information in a foreign language.

When the podcast host speaks clearly and articulately, students are better able to grasp the nuances of the language, understand the context of the conversation, and improve their own language skills. A well-spoken host can make complex concepts easier to comprehend, engage the listener's attention, and create a more enjoyable learning experience overall.

Furthermore, articulate speech not only aids in comprehension but also helps students develop their own speaking skills. By listening to a host who models proper pronunciation and intonation, students can improve their own ability to communicate effectively in the foreign language. This process of imitation and practice is essential for language acquisition and fluency.

In conclusion, the articulate speech of a podcast host plays a crucial role in enhancing the learning experience for students listening to content in a foreign language. By focusing on clear communication and pronunciation, podcast hosts can help students improve their language skills, deepen their understanding of the content, and ultimately become more confident and proficient in the target language.

3. Clean recording with no sound interfering

When students are learning a foreign language, listening to podcasts becomes an important tool for immersing themselves in the language environment. Our research shows that 30% of students believe that a clear recording without background noise is the most important aspect when listening to podcasts in a foreign language. This makes sense, as effective language learning requires clear and understandable audio content.

The presence of background noise or music can distract students and make it difficult to understand the content of the podcast. A clean recording allows students to focus on pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary, which significantly improves the quality of their foreign language learning.

Additionally, the absence of background noise in a podcast recording enhances the perception of foreign language speech. The clearer and more understandable the recording, the easier it is for students to adapt to the new language and improve their listening skills.

Thus, a clear recording without extraneous noise is a key factor when choosing podcasts for learning a foreign language. This aspect helps students to effectively use the audio material in their learning and achieve better results in learning a foreign language.

4. Actual topic

For 12.5% of students, finding a relevant topic is a key aspect when listening to a podcast in a foreign language. This is because it is important for them to have an interest in the topics discussed in the podcast in order to maintain their attention and motivation in learning a foreign language. Understanding and discussing relevant topics helps them to expand their vocabulary, improve their language comprehension, and develop their communication skills. For these students, choosing podcasts that cover topics that are relevant to their interests or personal experiences is crucial. They aim to ensure that the information they receive from podcasts is not only useful for language learning, but also relevant and applicable to their daily lives. Additionally, listening to podcasts on current topics can motivate students to continue learning the language, as they see how they can put their knowledge into practice.

Therefore, the relevance of the topic in podcasts for foreign language learners is crucial and can have a significant impact on their motivation and learning outcomes.

5. Familiar vocabulary

When it comes to listening to podcasts in a foreign language, familiarity with vocabulary plays a crucial role in comprehension and overall enjoyment for many students. According to a recent survey, 12.5% of students emphasized the importance of familiar vocabulary when tuning into podcasts in a language that is not their native tongue.

For these students, hearing words and phrases that they are already familiar with can greatly enhance their listening experience. It helps them to feel more confident in their ability to understand and follow along with the content being presented. Familiar vocabulary acts as a bridge that connects them to the new language, making it easier to grasp the overall message and context of the podcast.

Furthermore, having a strong foundation of familiar vocabulary can also boost students' motivation and engagement levels. When they are able to recognize and comprehend key words or phrases, it instills a sense of accomplishment and encourages them to continue learning and improving their language skills.

In addition, familiar vocabulary can serve as a valuable tool for expanding one's language proficiency. By repeatedly encountering and using familiar words in different contexts, students can solidify their understanding and retention of those terms. This, in turn, can help them to gradually build their vocabulary and become more fluent in the foreign language.

In conclusion, while familiar vocabulary may only be one aspect of listening to podcasts in a foreign language, its significance should not be underestimated. For many students, it serves as a cornerstone for successful language learning and can greatly enhance their overall listening experience.

Table 1

Express Your Attitude towards Using Podcasts in English Class (Likert scale)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Do you think working with podcasts is an interesting and unusual way to work?	18	12	4	4	2
Do you think that recording a podcast and discussing it throughout the semester has helped you feel more confident in your listening and speaking skills?	14	16	5	3	2
Are you ready to repeat your experience with podcasts and even prefer them to completing written assignments from a textbook?	17	15	3	2	2
Do you find that working with podcasts has become a pleasant distraction from your regular study routine?	17	13	4	5	1
Do you see podcast creation as an opportunity to earn extra points for your semester work?	20	10	6	4	0

The vast majority of the students (80%) confirmed the effectiveness of using podcasts in the process of teaching foreign languages. In addition, since the university trains prospective foreign language teachers, most students confidently stated that they would necessarily use this technology in school lessons. Many students have already used and are using podcasts quite effectively during their teaching practice at school.

Research Results

Numerous investigations have demonstrated the efficacy of incorporating podcasts into English language instruction. For instance, a study conducted by Chen and Chung (2008) revealed that the use of podcasts substantially enhances students' listening abilities and broadens their vocabulary. Li and Chan (2007) spoke about the importance of podcasts emphasizing the importance of reducing student anxiety. Additionally, a study by Rosell-Aguilar (2007, 2015) demonstrated that podcasts boost students' motivation and self-assurance.

In our experiment special attention was given to exercises directed to the development of listening comprehension skills. The task was:
be able to select and remember certain parts of information presented in an audio text, e.g. 6 Minute English https://www.afarinesh.org/podcast/bbc-6-minute-2015-podcast-53/

The Way We Look

After listening to the podcast *The Way We Look* students have to answer the questions:

What did men do to improve their physical appearance in the 18th and 19th century?

What does "suited and booted" mean?

At the Biysk Branch of AltSPU, we introduced a new approach to teaching based on the use of English podcasts. Our goal was to not only develop listening comprehension skills but also to improve pronunciation and improve accuracy. Podcasts, due to their interactivity and variety, became an essential tool that enriched the learning experience and made it more enjoyable for students. We carefully choose podcasts that match the level and interests of our students. Each podcast has its own strengths and is selected because of its benefits for learning. Below, we will discuss each resource we used, focusing on its strengths and suitability for different levels.

One of the first resources used during classes was the BBC's *"6 Minute English"* podcast (2008). Its short length (only 6 minutes per episode) was not a disadvantage but an advantage, especially for beginner students. Students who are just starting their journey often struggle with long listening times. "6 Minute English" solves this problem with short but informative and engaging segments that allow students to develop their listening skills without feeling overwhelmed or losing concentration. The topics covered in the podcast are varied and cover important social issues, helping students expand their vocabulary and horizons. The convenient length allows it to be included in the curriculum even with limited time. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/6-minute-english)

Another resource we actively use is *"English Class 101"* (2009). Unlike the previous resource, this one is aimed at different levels of students. Its structure is designed so that each episode focuses on a specific topic and analyzes the necessary vocabulary and grammar. This is valuable for organizing knowledge and consolidating material. In addition, *"English Class 101"* emphasizes cultural aspects, helping students not only learn words and expressions but also understand their usage in context and cultural nuances. This brings students closer to real-life English communication. (https://www.englishclass101.com/dashboard)

"The English We Speak" (2016), another BBC podcast, stands out for its focus on natural, informal language. Each episode teaches interesting expressions, phrases, and idioms commonly used in spoken English. Knowledge of these expressions enriches students' speech and makes it more natural. Like the previous two podcasts, *"The English We Speak"* goes beyond vocabulary and introduces students to cultural realities, helping them understand communication contexts. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/the-english-we-speak)

"All Ears English" (2013) is a valuable resource for improving conversational skills. It emphasizes practical language use in various social settings. Episodes often include sections on etiquette and behavior rules in different contexts, from business negotiations to casual conversations with friends. For students planning to use English outside the classroom, this podcast helps them feel confident when communicating with native speakers, avoiding awkward situations. By boosting confidence, it encourages students to actively use English. (https://www.allearsenglish.com/)

"Luke's ENGLISH Podcast" (2009) – the podcasts are presented by Luke Thompson, a stand-up comedian and English teacher. Here one can find numerous transcripts, audio and premium episodes focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Students are sure to find useful grammatical forms and vocabulary. Luke's podcast has won 5 awards – a British Council ELTon nomination. More than 150 million downloads in total prove Luke's podcast's huge popularity. (https://teacherluke.co.uk/)

Lastly, *"TED Talks Daily"* (2014) is a podcast featuring short but insightful talks covering a wide range of topics. Listening to TED talks not only improves listening skills but also broadens horizons, exposing students to different perspectives and interesting speakers. The vocabulary used in these talks is diverse, making them suitable for intermediate-level students. TED Talks encourages critical thinking and the ability to process information in English. Thus, using TED Talks in the classroom contributes not only linguistically but also personally to student development. (https://www.ted.com/)

Discussions

Using podcasts gives students the opportunity to choose their own path when learning a foreign language: they can listen to podcasts at a convenient time, in a convenient place, and work with the podcast as many times as they need to learn information.

The methodology of listening training was developed by Sysoev (2012) and can be used with podcasts. It consists of three stages:

- before listening;
- while listening;
- after listening.

In accordance with the methodology of listening training developed by Sysoev (2012), appropriate exercises have been developed during the experiment.

At the first stage, students are immersed in the context of the selected podcast. The students are offered the following assignments:

- read the headline and offer your suggestions about the content of the podcast;
- look at the illustration and the title, predict what the story will be about;
- make a list of questions about the intended content of the story.

The second stage involves listening to the podcast directly. The following tasks are used at this stage:

- answer a question about the main idea of the story;
- identify correct and incorrect statements;
- complete sentences using information from the podcast;
- read the sentence and correct factual errors and identify information not present in the podcast.

The third stage of working with a podcast involves analyzing the listened podcast in oral or written form. Students can express their attitude to the text they have listened to, and suggest what might happen to the character next.

As an example of working on a podcast with students of the Biysk branch of AltSPU, a series of exercises developed in the course of teaching the discipline "English text reading Workshop" can serve. Luke Thompson's podcast "The Mountain" was chosen for the work. Luke used the Commaful platform (2016) (https://commaful.com/). The story is presented in https://commaful.com/play/aknier/the-mountain/. Students highly appreciated Luke's podcasts and mentioned that Luke is a very emotional speaker, who knows how to captivate the listener.

As a native English speaker he demonstrates his perfect pronunciation. Since students are learning the discipline of reading texts in English, the choice of educational material is important. In interviews, students note that Luke's chosen texts are always interesting, immediately attract their attention, motivate them to work with the texts. In the process of presenting the text of the story, Luke makes all the necessary explanations if in his opinion a particular word may cause difficulty in understanding for a non-native speaker.

The texts selected by Luke arouse a burning desire among students to discuss the problem raised in a particular story. After an oral discussion, students are given the task of expressing their point of view in writing in the form of an essay. Thus, using the example of one short story presented in Luke Thompson's podcast, the teacher trains students in mastering the skills of all types of speech activity: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

So, using the tools of observation and survey, we investigated how using podcasts impacted university students in their classes. We wanted to see if listening to these audio lessons helped them do better. We gathered data from surveys, looked at their grades, and even read some of their comments on the experience.

What we found was very interesting. It seemed like the students who consistently tuned into the podcasts generally got higher scores on the midterm exam. There was also a link between how often they listened and their overall grade – the more they listened, the better they tended to do. Now, we did consider that maybe the students who were already good at the subject were just more likely to listen to the podcasts in the first place, so we factored that in. Even then, using podcasts seemed to give a small boost to their grades.

But it wasn't just about the numbers. We also dug into what the students themselves thought about using podcasts. Many students said that hearing the information explained in a different way, with real-world examples, really helped them understand the trickier concepts. They also liked being able to listen on the go, like when they were commuting or hitting the gym. Students were using their time more effectively.

Of course, not all the students liked working with podcasts. Some students found them distracting and preferred to stick to reading textbooks. And a few people suggested it would be helpful to have written notes alongside the podcasts, to make it easier to take notes.

Overall, it appears that podcasts can be a useful learning tool for many university students, especially for prospective foreign language teachers. They can help students grasp concepts, make learning more convenient, and maybe even improve their grades. However, they're not a magic bullet – what works for one student might not work for another. So, it's important to think about how to design podcasts in a way that suits different learning styles and to offer other learning resources as well."

Recommendations

Using podcasts in teaching English has several advantages:

Authenticity: Podcasts often contain authentic material that reflects the speech of native speakers.

Availability: Podcasts are available at any time and anywhere, allowing students to study independently at their own pace.

Variety: There are a wide variety of podcasts on various topics and at different levels, allowing you to choose material that meets the needs of individual students.

Motivation: Interesting and engaging content helps increase student motivation and involvement in the learning process.

Efficiency: Research shows that using podcasts in English classes contributes to the development of listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills.

For effective use of podcasts in English language teaching, it is recommended to**:**

- choose podcasts that match the students**'** language proficiency;
- invite students to listen to podcasts on topics of interest;
- use podcasts to develop various listening skills **(**global understanding, detailed understanding, selective understanding**)**;
- offer students to complete various tasks based on the podcasts they have listened to **(**answer questions, retell, compile a glossary, participate in a discussion**)**;
- combine listening to podcasts with using other educational materials (textbooks, dictionaries, online resources).

In conclusion, we can say that the use of podcasts in teaching English in the Biysk branch of AltSPU named after V. M. Shukshin proved to be an effective method that allowed improving the quality of education, increasing students' interest in the subject, and developing not only their linguistic but also communication skills. The variety of podcasts used has provided a comprehensive approach to learning, allowing students to improve their listening skills, expand their vocabulary, learn about the cultural characteristics of English- speaking countries, and develop confidence in communicating in English. This approach allows teachers to adapt the learning process to the individual needs of each student, which is key to successful learning.

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The Impact of Gender Roles on Acquiring English Language among Yemeni EFL Tertiary Students

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Abstract

Gender is one of the important factors that affect foreign language acquisition (FLA). Consequently, gender differences are expected to influence the academic performance of both females and males. While previous studies explored gender and language learning globally, limited research has been conducted in the Yemeni context, particularly within public universities. This study addresses that gap and aims to investigate the impact of gender roles on acquiring a foreign language among EFL students at public universities in Yemen. It particularly investigates the extent of gender roles on foreign language acquisition, discovers the degree of gender differences in academic performance, and analyses additional factors that may influence gender differences in foreign language learning. The study adopts a quantitative research method by disseminating a comprehensive questionnaire designed to measure various aspects such as motivation, participation, confidence, and academic performance. The questionnaire was distributed to 31 teachers, and the data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The survey targets a representative sample of teachers from Departments of English, Colleges of Education and Colleges of Arts and Languages at some public universities in Yemen. The results reveal significant insights into the impact of gender on foreign language acquisition and academic performance. The study uncovers how gender roles influence motivation and engagement in language learning. Besides, it identifies any significant differences in academic outcomes between male and female students. These insights will be valuable for developing tailored educational strategies and interventions to support students more effectively.

Introduction

Gender roles have been widely recognized as influential in the study of foreign language acquisition, shaping how individuals approach and succeed in learning a new language. Research consistently highlights that cognitive functions, motivation, and classroom behavior- often differentiated along gender lines- can significantly impact language learning outcomes. For example, studies suggest that females generally demonstrate higher motivation, enhanced verbal abilities, and a greater affinity for social interaction, which are key factors in successful language learning (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Sunderland, 2000). In contrast, males tend to excel in areas such as spatial reasoning, which may not be directly tied to language learning but can influence their learning strategies (Ellis, 1994; Oxford, 1994).

The roots of these gender differences can be traced to a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. Biological differences, such as hormonal variations, are known to influence cognitive processes that are pertinent to language acquisition (Kimura, 1999; Halpern, 2002). Psychosocial factors, including societal expectations and cultural norms, also play a critical role in shaping how males and females engage with language learning tasks (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008). In regions like Hadhramaut, where cultural and social expectations regarding gender are deeply ingrained, these dynamics become even more pronounced in educational settings, such as Seiyun University (Elyas & Badawood, 2016).

Additionally, recent studies have emphasized how gender norms, rather than gender alone, shape learners' motivational trajectories. For example, Henry and Thorsen (2018) demonstrated that male learners may feel demotivated in language classrooms where language learning is perceived as a feminine activity, while female learners often experience enhanced motivation when language learning aligns with culturally sanctioned roles. Such findings are particularly relevant to the Yemeni context, where traditional gender roles remain deeply embedded in both society and education.

Understanding the gender-based differences in foreign language acquisition is crucial for developing teaching strategies that promote equality and inclusiveness in the classroom. Educators must account for these disparities to create a learning environment where both male and female students can excel.

Literature review
Role of Gender in Foreign Language Acquisition

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals engage with and succeed in foreign language acquisition. Numerous studies have indicated that males and females often approach language learning differently due to cognitive, motivational, and sociocultural factors (Ellis, 1994; Sunderland, 2000). Females have been found to generally outperform males in verbal abilities, particularly in tasks that involve memory, communication, and linguistic creativity, all of which are critical for successful language acquisition (Oxford, 1994; Halpern, 2002). This is often linked to higher levels of motivation and stronger use of learning strategies, such as collaboration and social interaction, which are essential in acquiring a second or foreign language (Nyikos, 1990).

Research by Sunderland (2000) suggests that societal expectations and gender socialization patterns may contribute to these differences. In many cultures, females are encouraged to be more expressive and communicative, which can translate into stronger language skills. This may explain why, across different educational settings, female learners tend to excel in foreign language courses compared to their male counterparts. In contrast, males are often socialized to excel in spatial and analytical tasks, which are less directly linked to language learning (Kimura, 1999).

Additionally, Pavlenko and Piller (2008) argue that gender dynamics in the classroom, including teacher interactions and peer behaviors, can either reinforce or challenge these traditional roles. This highlights the importance of understanding gender roles not just biologically, but also in the context of cultural norms and expectations, which significantly shape foreign language learning experiences.

Building on this, Menard-Warwick (2021) argued that gender identity is not static but negotiated within the language learning process. Her work highlights how learners- especially women in conservative societies- may find in language learning a site for agency and redefinition of self, as well as tension between cultural norms and emerging identities. This adds depth to the sociocultural lens through which gender and language acquisition are analysed.

Gender Differences in Academic Performance

The academic performance of male and female students in foreign language acquisition has been extensively studied, with results consistently showing that females tend to outperform males in both language proficiency and academic achievements (Ellis, 1994; Vandergrift, 2005). Several large-scale studies have found that female students generally score higher on language proficiency tests and demonstrate better retention of vocabulary, grammatical rules, and overall linguistic competence (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

One explanation for this difference is that females tend to employ more effective learning strategies, such as metacognitive strategies, which include planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning (Oxford, 1990; Vandergrift, 2005). These strategies allow learners to become more aware of their language acquisition process, thereby enhancing their ability to self-correct and improve. Males, on the other hand, may rely more on task-based or competitive approaches to language learning, which can be effective in some contexts but may not lead to the same level of linguistic proficiency as strategies used by females (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Supporting these claims, Alzahrani (2019) found that Saudi female EFL students consistently outperformed males in academic achievement and strategy use. His study, situated in a culturally comparable region to Yemen, highlighted the significant role of motivation and cognitive strategies- particularly those emphasizing reflection and self-regulation-in explaining female students' stronger performance.

However, it is important to note that these findings are not universal and may vary across different cultural and educational contexts. In some studies, such as those conducted in more gender-equitable educational environments, the gap between male and female academic performance in foreign language acquisition has been shown to narrow (Elyas & Badawood, 2016). This suggests that while gender differences in academic performance are significant, they are also influenced by broader educational and societal factors. These findings echo Alzahrani's (2019) conclusions and reinforce

the idea that the sociocultural context plays a moderating role in gender-based academic differences.

Additional Factors Influencing Gender Differences in Foreign Language Acquisition

In addition to cognitive and motivational differences, several other factors contribute to the gender disparities observed in foreign language acquisition. One major factor is the influence of teachers and the classroom environment. Research has shown that teachers may unconsciously perpetuate gender stereotypes by offering more language support and encouragement to female students than to males, thereby reinforcing the notion that language learning is a 'female domain' (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008; Sunderland, 2000).

Complementing this, Çelik, Arikan and Caner (2019) investigated gendered beliefs among pre-service English teachers and found that many held implicit biases associating language aptitude and classroom discipline more with female students. Such perceptions can shape teacher-student interactions and potentially contribute to unequal encouragement or evaluation in EFL classrooms, especially in traditional contexts like Yemen.

Cultural expectations regarding gender roles also play a significant part. In traditional societies, where gender roles are more rigidly defined, males may be discouraged from engaging fully in language learning because it is viewed as less aligned with masculine identity (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). In such contexts, females may have greater opportunities to practice language skills, both inside and outside the classroom, which can lead to better outcomes in language acquisition. Conversely, in more egalitarian cultures, where language skills are equally valued for both genders, these disparities are often less pronounced (Piller & Takahashi, 2006).

Moreover, individual differences in personality traits, such as openness to experience and extroversion, have been linked to language learning success, with some studies suggesting that these traits may manifest differently between genders (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Females, who tend to score higher on measures of openness and social orientation, may find it easier to engage with the communicative aspects of language learning, whereas males, who may score higher on measures of independence and competition, might favor different approaches that could affect their overall language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Khany and Ghaemi (2020) advanced this discussion by demonstrating that gender impacts language achievement through metacognitive awareness. Female students showed significantly higher levels of planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation, which contributed to their improved outcomes in EFL contexts.

Finally, access to language learning resources, including exposure to native speakers and language learning technology, has also been identified as a factor that can influence gender differences in foreign language acquisition. In environments where both genders have equal access to such resources, the gender gap in language proficiency tends to decrease (Sunderland, 2000).

As a result, recent scholarship calls for the adoption of gender-responsive pedagogies to mitigate these disparities. For example, Tate (2022) advocates for inclusive curricula, equitable classroom practices, and teacher training programs that critically address gendered expectations. Such approaches could be especially

impactful in Yemen, where structured efforts to promote gender-sensitive teaching in EFL are still emerging.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, gender differences can significantly influence students' language learning outcomes. In Yemen, traditional gender roles often shape how male and female students engage with educational environments, including classroom participation, self-expression, and language learning strategies. These cultural and societal expectations may result in varied experiences and academic performance between male and female learners.

Research has shown that females often display higher levels of self-regulation, motivation, and metacognitive awareness in language learning, whereas males may demonstrate greater confidence in task-based or competitive settings (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Vandergrift, 2005). However, most of these findings emerge from Western or more general international contexts. There is a noticeable gap in research focusing on how gender roles specifically impact foreign language acquisition within the Yemeni EFL university setting.

Although previous studies have explored gender and language learning, limited attention has been given to the influence of gender roles in shaping language learning behaviours and academic outcomes in Yemeni public universities. Without a contextual understanding of these dynamics, educators may unintentionally employ uniform teaching methods that fail to address the distinct learning needs of male and female students. If these gender-related differences are not addressed, they may contribute to unequal learning outcomes and hinder some students from reaching their full potential.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining how gender roles affect foreign language acquisition among EFL students at public universities in Yemen. In doing so, it also seeks to evaluate whether current teaching approaches accommodate gender-based differences in motivation, participation, and performance, ultimately informing more inclusive and effective instructional strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to explore the role of gender in foreign language acquisition and its impact on the academic performance of EFL students. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the influence of gender roles on foreign language acquisition among EFL students at public universities in Yemen

2. Examine the extent of gender-based differences in academic performance among male and female EFL students

3. Identify gender-related factors (e.g., motivation, participation, and learning strategies) that shape students' experiences and outcomes in EFL learning

Research Questions

To address the objectives, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do gender roles influence foreign language acquisition among EFL students at public universities in Yemen?

2. How significant are gender differences in academic performance within the EFL context at public universities in Yemen?

3. What gender-related factors (e.g., motivation, participation, classroom engagement) affect students' success in acquiring a foreign language?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the role of gender in foreign language acquisition and its effect on academic performance among EFL students at public universities in Yemen. The study targets a specific group of students enrolled in English language programs, with the aim of understanding how gender differences manifest in their language learning experiences. The scope is limited to this educational context and does not extend to other universities or non-EFL learners.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations. Due to time and resource constraints, it relies primarily on quantitative data obtained through self-administered questionnaires. While this method allows for broad data collection from a large sample, it may limit the depth of insight into personal experiences and cultural nuances, particularly those related to gender dynamics in language learning.

Another limitation is the use of convenience sampling, which may affect the representativeness of the sample and limit the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific group of EFL students at public universities in Yemen. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential risks of social desirability bias or misinterpretation of questions by respondents.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable preliminary insights into the influence of gender roles on foreign language acquisition in the Yemeni EFL context.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for students, educators, curriculum designers, and researchers interested in English language acquisition within gendered cultural contexts. By examining the role of gender roles in shaping language learning experiences, this research contributes to a better understanding of cognitive, motivational, and socio-cultural factors that may differ between male and female learners.

In the Yemeni context, where traditional gender expectations often influence classroom dynamics and academic engagement, the findings can inform the development of more inclusive and effective teaching strategies. These strategies can help address the distinct learning needs of male and female students, improve academic outcomes, and promote equity in foreign language education.

Furthermore, this study supports the growing movement toward gender-responsive pedagogy in EFL contexts. As Tate (2022) argues, implementing equitable instructional approaches that acknowledge gender-based learning differences can help reduce disparities and foster more supportive classroom environments for all learners. These insights are especially relevant for countries like Yemen, where language education reform must consider deeply embedded cultural norms.

Moreover, this study adds to the limited body of literature on gender and foreign language learning in Arab and developing country contexts, offering a foundation for future research and educational reform.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is intended to explore the role of gender in foreign language acquisition and its impact on the academic performance of EFL students. Therefore, the survey method was implemented here as the design for this study to investigate the influence of gender roles on the process of foreign language acquisition among EFL students, examine the extent of gender differences in academic performance within the context of EFL learning, and identify how gender-related factors shape the overall experience and success of students in acquiring a foreign language at public universities in Yemen.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire, developed specifically to assess how gender roles influence foreign language acquisition among EFL students. The questionnaire was designed based on a review of established instruments from previous studies (e.g., Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) and was adapted to reflect the cultural and educational context of Yemeni public universities.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of three specialists in EFL education and educational psychology. Their feedback helped revise ambiguous or culturally inappropriate items. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted with 30 EFL teachers to assess the clarity and reliability of the instrument.

Importantly, the structure of the questionnaire was also informed by research highlighting the impact of teacher perceptions and gender-based classroom dynamics on student outcomes. For example, Çelik, Arikan and Caner (2019) found that pre-service English teachers often held implicit gender biases, which influenced their expectations and interactions with students. This insight supported the inclusion of items related to motivation, participation, and perceived gender roles in language learning, which are often shaped by both internal beliefs and external classroom influences.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part collected demographic data, including gender, academic year, and major. The second part included 17 items divided into three sections:

Section 1: Five items measuring perceptions of gender roles in language learning.

Section 2: Five items assessing differences in academic performance between genders.

Section 3: Seven items identifying factors such as motivation, participation, and cognitive style that may contribute to gender-based differences.

Table 1
Reliability Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	No. of Participants
.825	17	31

Population and Sampling

This study included respondents from public universities in Yemen. The participants were teaching staff from English departments at these institutions. A convenience sampling strategy was employed, whereby the questionnaire was initially distributed to known contacts who then shared it with colleagues who met the research criteria. A total of 31 respondents completed the questionnaire: 15 were male (48.4%) and 16 were female (51.6%). This near-equal gender distribution contributes to the credibility of the findings, as it ensures representation from both male and female perspectives. Such balance helps reduce gender bias and enhances the overall reliability of the data (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
Gender of the Questionnaire Respondents
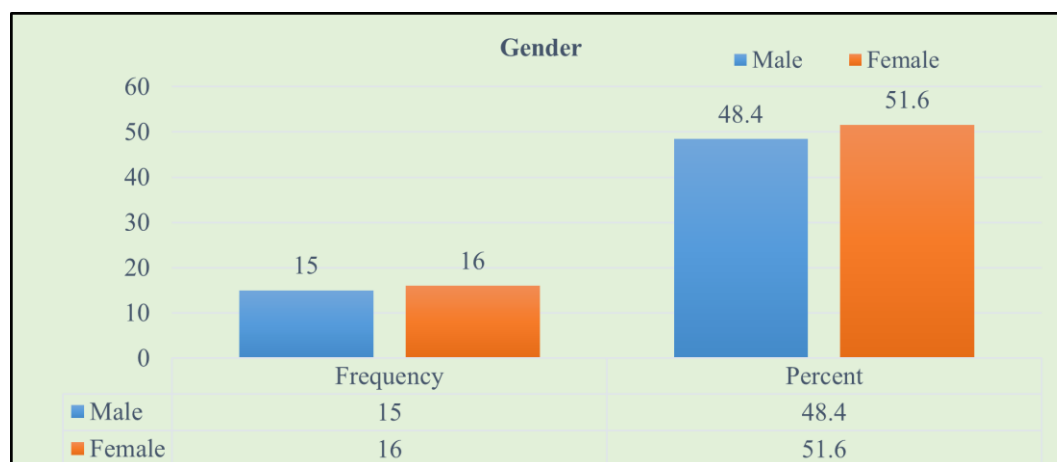
As has been mentioned earlier, the study respondents are experts in English educations. The results revealed that the majority of respondents were either Assistant Professors (i.e., PhD holders) or Assistant Teachers (Master's Holders) with equal percentages (25.8%) each. Assistant Professors came in the second level with a percentage of (19.4%) followed by Demonstrators (12.9%) and then Professors (9.7%). Other respondents, who have no specific title constituted only (6.5%), see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Respondents' Designations at Their Universities

	Demonstrator	Teacher Assistant	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor	Other
Percent	12.9	25.8	25.8	19.4	9.7	6.5
Frequency	4	8	8	6	3	2
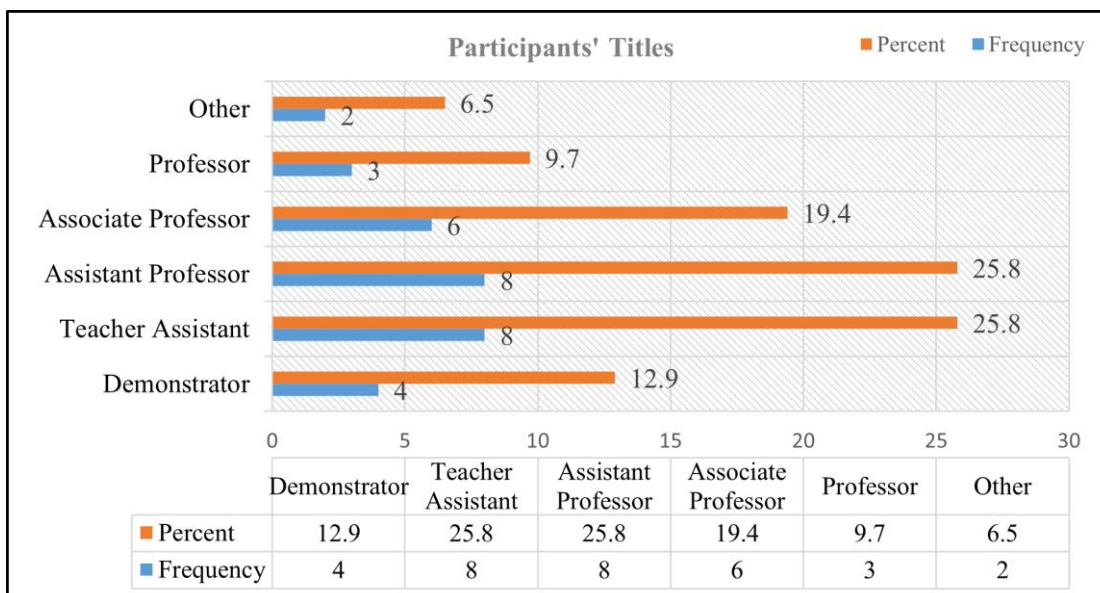
With regard to the respondents' teaching experience, the results showed that almost half of them (41.9%) had more than ten years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language. This high percentage supports the validity and reliability of the study, as it reflects the perspectives of experienced educators who have spent a significant portion of their professional lives in EFL teaching. In contrast, respondents with less than one year of teaching experience made up the second-largest group, accounting for 19.2%. Notably, their responses did not significantly differ from those of their more experienced counterparts. Those with 4 to 6 years of experience constituted 16.1% of the sample, followed by participants with 7 to 10 years of experience at 12.9%. The smallest group consisted of respondents with 1 to 3 years of experience, comprising only 9.7% of the total (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Respondents' Years of Experience
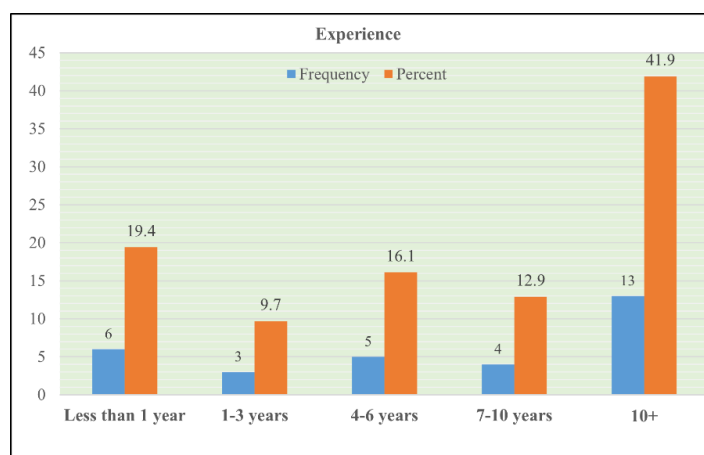
Concerning the respondents' majors, the results revealed that (35.5%) of them were of English Language Studies major followed by (29%) in TESOL then those whose major is Applied Linguistics came in the third position reaching (22.6%). As the nature of the study is an educational oriented, those majoring in literature and translation are found to at the bottom of the list each is of only (6.5%) (see Figure 4). It could be argued here that such results significantly contribute in the authenticity as well as the validity of this study findings and rationale of its concluding suggestions and recommendations.

Figure 4
Respondents' Majors
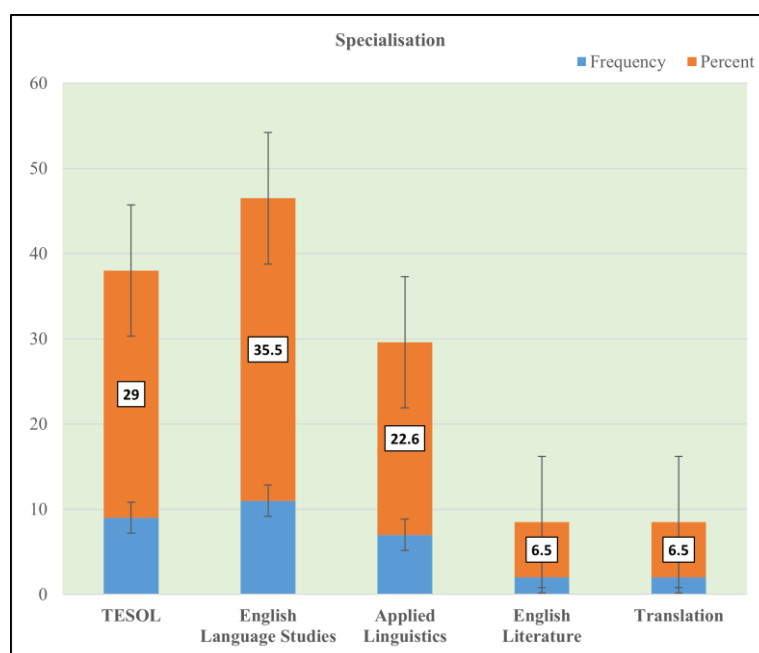
Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms. Responses are collected over two weeks. To ensure participant anonymity and encourage honest responses, no identifying information will be requested.

Results and Discussion

As has been mentioned earlier, the results of the current study essentially rely on the experts' viewpoints based on their responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of a number of seventeen items distributed on three sections. The first section consists of five items all focus on role of gender in foreign language acquisition. The second section includes five items too and all of them deal with the concept of gender differences in academic performance. Finally, the third section is devoted for important factors influencing gender differences in foreign language acquisition such as teachers' motivations, attitudes and perception of the gender role language education. The questionnaire items were on a five-point Likert scale of agreement where: 1= Strong Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A) and 5= Strongly Agree (SA). However, while making the analyses the first

two choices were considered as one concept indicating disagreement (SD+D= D) as negative responses while the last two choices were also dealt with as one concept indicating agreement (A+SA= A) as a positive response. The respondents' indecision was also considered and retained the same statistical values. The results have been analyzed in details based on the study variables including the respondents' agreement (A) and disagreement (DA) along with the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) against each item.

In response to the first research questions "**To what extent do gender roles influence foreign language acquisition among EFL students at public universities in Yemen?**", participants were asked to reflect on both societal expectations and observed motivational trends. One survey item asked whether respondents believed that females are more motivated than males to learn a foreign language. As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants (77.4%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, suggesting a widespread perception that females display higher motivation in language learning. In contrast, only 11.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 6.5% remained neutral.

Although motivation is an individual factor, these responses may reflect perceptions rooted in gender norms, where females are often expected to engage more actively in language-related fields. This perception may influence both actual motivation and performance.

Regarding academic specialization preferences, more than half of the respondents (51.6%) agreed that males tend to prefer other fields over foreign language studies, implying that English is more strongly favoured by females. Meanwhile, 19.4% disagreed with this statement, and 29% remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty about whether these preferences are shaped by gender roles or personal interests. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics (N=31), the Role of Gender in Foreign Language Acquisition

No.	Item	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	M	SD
1	Females are more motivated to learn a foreign language than males.	77.40	6.50	16.10	3.839	0.97
2	Males prefer to specialize in other majors rather than studying a foreign language.	51.60	29.00	19.40	3.323	0.98
3	The cognitive processes of female students give them an advantage in foreign language learning.	61.30	19.40	19.30	3.548	0.94
4	Females participate more actively in foreign language classes than males.	74.20	9.70	16.10	3.774	0.89
5	Males display higher confidence in speaking a foreign language in public compared to females.	35.50	22.60	41.90	2.839	0.98

In the above Table (2), it is clear the majority of the respondents believe that 'the cognitive processes of female students give them an advantage in foreign language learning.' On the other, the rest of the participants are either frankly disagree to this viewpoint (19.3%) or reserve their perspective on this issue. Relatively, almost three quarters of the respondents (74.2%) believe that 'females participate more actively in foreign language classes than males' and only (16.1%) disagreed to this point and only (9.7%) kept neutral. Unlike the items discussed above, the last statement (q5) revealed that that majority of the respondents either disagreed (41.9%) or provide no opinion (22.6%) about the point restricted to the belief that 'males display higher confidence in speaking a foreign language in public compared to females.' Only (35.5%) agreed to the priority of males in confidence level (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Respondents' Viewpoints on Students' Confidence Level
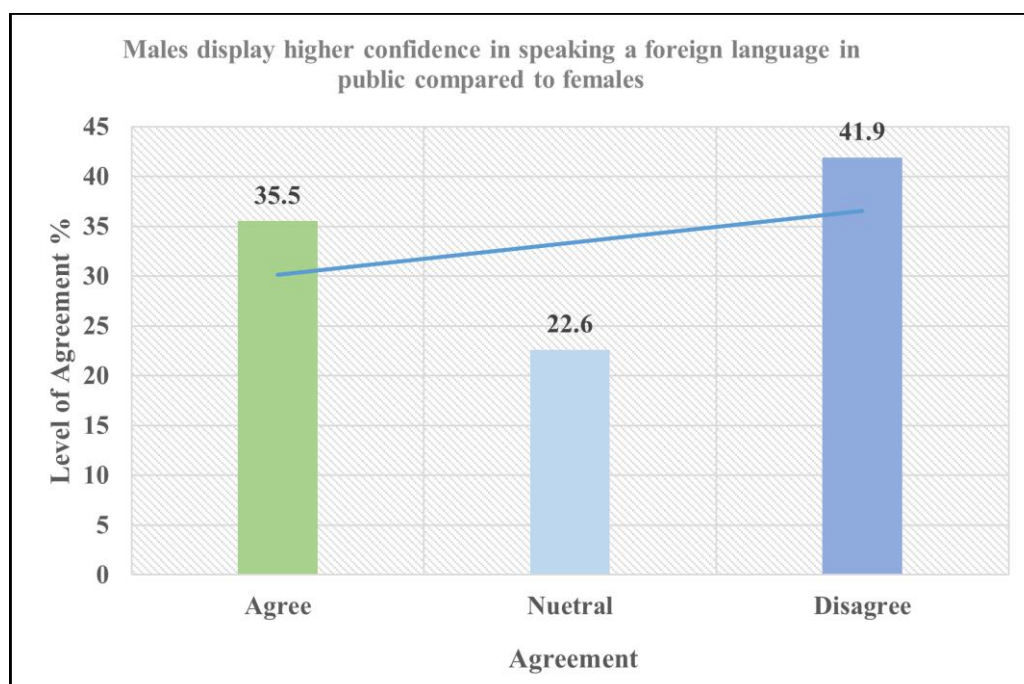
In response to the second question, '**How significant are gender differences in academic performance within the EFL context at public universities in Yemen?**' Pearson correlation test was carried out to find out effect of gender role on students' language sensitivity, assessment scores, verbal ability divergent thinking and numerical and spiritual abilities based on the participants' perspectives. In other words, the items related to this variable were tested both descriptively measuring the Mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*), and inferentially through Pearson correlation (see Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics (N=31), Gender Differences in Academic Performance

No.	Item	M	SD	Pearson Correlation	Rank	Sig. P-value
2	Females generally score higher in foreign language assessments than males.	3.87	0.98	0.625**	1	0.001
4	Females' divergent thinking style helps them achieve better scores in foreign language courses.	3.58	0.92	0.716**	2	0.001
1	Females are more sensitive to new language forms and more likely to use them in communication than males.	3.52	0.89	0.769**	3	0.001
3	Females have an advantage in verbal ability, memory, comprehension speed, and fluency.	3.48	0.93	0.686**	4	0.001
5	Males have an advantage in cognitive measures such as numerical ability, spatial orientation, and spatial imagery.	3.10	0.94	0.435*	5	0.014

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As could be seen in Table 3 above, the second item "Females generally score higher in foreign language assessments than males," came in the first rank with a mean of (3.87) and a standard deviation of (0.98). Inferentially, the Pearson correlation reached (0.625**) showing a significant effect ($p < 001$). This indicates that 'Language Sensitivity' is most affected concept by the gender differences in academic performance followed by 'Divergent Thinking' in the fourth statement with a mean of (3.58) and a standard deviation of (0.92). It important to mention here that this item achieved the higher Pearson correlation value (0.716**) than the second item with a same *P*-value. The third item came in the third rank with a mean of (3.52) and a standard deviation of (0.89). It is important to note here that this item got the highest Pearson correlation (0.716**) compared to the other items. This indicates that 'Language Sensitivity' is the most affected aspect by the gender differences in academic performance ($p < 0.001$).

Relatively, gender differences in academic performance shows a high impact students' 'Verbal Ability' as seen the results of fourth ranked item stated as 'Females have an advantage in verbal ability, memory, comprehension speed, and fluency,' with a mean of (3.48) and a standard deviation of (0.93) and a Pearson correlation reached (0.686**) with a high significant *p*-value (0.001). The fifth item, stated to cover students' 'Numerical and Spatial Abilities' came at the last rank with a mean of (3.10) and a standard deviation of (0.94). Pearson correlation showed a moderate (0.435*) impact of the gender differences in academic performance on numerical and spatial abilities of students with a *p*-value of (0.014).

In the same vein, the Pearson correlation test was used to find a typical answer to the last question of the study, "**How do gender-related factors, such as motivation, cognitive styles, and classroom behaviors, impact the process of acquiring a foreign language at public universities in Yemen?**", the Pearson correlation test was applied. The study results have been listed accordingly in Table (4).

Table 4

Pearson Correlation, the Impact of Gender-Related Factors, on the Process of Acquiring FL

No.	Gender-Related Factor	M	SD	Pearson Correlation	Rank	Sig. P-value
1	Classroom Behaviors	3.52	0.58	0.822^{**}	1	0.001
4	Cognitive Styles	3.51	0.61	0.876^{**}	2	0.001
2	Motivation	3.50	0.62	0.852^{**}	3	0.001

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in Table 4 above, the gender-related factors almost have an equal high influence on the process of acquiring a foreign language in the Yemeni context. The means of the three factors seem to be in sequence where classroom behaviors came in the first rank followed cognitive styles then entailed by the factor of motivation reaching 3.52, 3.51, and 3.50 respectively. However, the case is not the same for results of Pearson correlation cognitive styles surpasses the other factors reaching the highest Pearson correlation value (0.876^{**}) followed by motivation then classroom behaviors reaching (0.852^{**}) and (0.822^{**}) respectively. These high, and interchangeable, results reveal the great influence on the gender-related factors on the process of acquiring a foreign language in the Yemeni Universities. This is proved by the results of significance value where all alpha (α) results were found at zero level ($p< 0.001$).

Conclusion

Recent linguistic research has increasingly emphasized understanding gender as a social and cultural construct, particularly in relation to foreign language acquisition (FLA). This study confirms that gender roles, shaped by societal expectations and cultural norms-significantly influence language learning, especially within the context of public universities in Yemen. The findings indicate that gender differences affect multiple dimensions of FLA, with female students generally outperforming their male counterparts in language-related tasks. Females demonstrated higher levels of motivation, verbal proficiency, and alignment with socially constructed language-oriented roles, while male students tended to exhibit strengths in areas such as numerical or spatial reasoning, which are less directly connected to language acquisition.

These results underscore the importance of recognizing the intersection between gender and educational performance. Tailoring teaching strategies to acknowledge gender-related learning preferences and challenges can contribute to more equitable and effective language instruction, especially in culturally conservative contexts.

From the researchers' perspectives, these findings resonate with observations made during data collection. Many female participants expressed strong personal investment in language learning, often linking their motivation to long-term goals such as teaching, translation, or international careers. In contrast, several male respondents reported feeling socially discouraged from prioritizing language study, perceiving it as misaligned with their masculine career trajectories. These reflections illustrate that addressing gender disparities in education requires not only pedagogical reform, but also broader cultural shift.

Ultimately, this study has reinforced the importance of integrating both empirical evidence and cultural sensitivity into foreign language education. By acknowledging the role of gender in shaping learning experiences, educators and policymakers can design more inclusive practices that support the success of all learners.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study of gender roles and foreign language learning remains a relevant and evolving field of inquiry. Given the social and cognitive dimensions of FLA, future linguistics research should continue to explore how gender influences language acquisition, particularly in diverse educational contexts such as public universities in Yemen.

Due to time constraints, this study relied on online data collection methods, which may have impacted the accuracy of some responses. As a result, it is recommended that future research employ field-based data collection methods to obtain more reliable and diverse input. Additionally, the sample for this study exhibited an uneven age distribution, with the majority of respondents in the 23-27 age range. For future studies, it is advisable to ensure a more balanced age distribution to obtain a more representative dataset.

Furthermore, educators and policymakers are encouraged to integrate gender-responsive teaching practices into EFL curricula. These practices may include gender-neutral classroom management, inclusive materials, and equitable participation strategies that empower both male and female learners. As emphasized by Tate (2022), such pedagogical approaches are essential for promoting fairness, increasing engagement, and improving outcomes for all students in language education settings.

Finally, there is a need for further exploration of gender paradigms in FLA, as this area has not been extensively researched. Understanding these paradigms can contribute to the development of more equitable and effective language learning strategies that accommodate both male and female learners, particularly in EFL contexts.

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Collaborative Learning Approaches to Promote Peer Interaction and Support among L2 Learners: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Collaborative learning examines the role and effectiveness strategies in fostering peer interaction and supporting literacy development among second language (L2) learners. Drawing on 24 peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 1992 and 2021, this review synthesizes findings from diverse educational contexts across North America, Asia, and Europe. The review was conducted using a rigorous methodological protocol, including defined inclusion/exclusion criteria, structured database searches (Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar). Key cooperative learning approaches investigated include jigsaw, think-pair-share, peer feedback, and collaborative writing tasks. The findings indicate that cooperative learning significantly enhances peer interaction by promoting language-related episodes (LREs), negotiation of meaning, and mutual scaffolding, all of which contribute to improved engagement and language output. Furthermore, these strategies have been linked to gains in literacy-related outcomes such as reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and writing fluency. The review also highlights positive socio-cultural concepts, including increased learner confidence, motivation, and classroom participation. However, challenges such as proficiency imbalances, uneven group dynamics, and the need for teacher facilitation persist. Hence, collaborative learning serves as an umbrella term encompassing various group-based learning approaches, this systematic literature review specifically focuses on cooperative learning due to its structured nature and well-defined theoretical underpinnings. Cooperative learning is characterized by positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills development, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). These core elements differentiate it from more loosely organized collaborative strategies such as unstructured group discussions. In this review, approaches like Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, Reciprocal Teaching, Peer Review, and Collaborative Writing are included under the cooperative learning framework because they are implemented with clearly assigned roles, shared goals, and structured interaction sequences designed to ensure accountability and peer support. On the other hand, general group discussions that lack these formal components are intentionally excluded, as they do not consistently meet

the criteria for cooperative learning. This distinction allows for a more focused analysis of how intentionally designed cooperative structures influence L2 learners' engagement and literacy outcomes, compared to broader and less systematic forms of peer interaction.

Keywords: cooperative learning approaches, collaborative learning approaches, literacy, peer interaction, PRISMA, systematic literature review

Introduction

The development of literacy skills among second language (L2) learners remains a central concern in language education (Forsman, 2024; Li, 2025; Li & Pei, 2024; Thao et al. 2023). As global classrooms become increasingly linguistically diverse, educators face the challenge of supporting L2 learners in mastering not only the language itself but also the complex cognitive and academic skills required for reading and writing in a second language. Traditional, teacher-centered approaches often fail to address these needs, particularly in fostering meaningful peer interaction and learner autonomy. Collaborative learning approaches, and more specifically cooperative learning strategies, have emerged as promising pedagogical tools for promoting both social engagement and academic development in L2 contexts. Cooperative learning refers to structured group-based instructional methods in which learners work interdependently to achieve shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Rooted in socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), cooperative learning emphasizes the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and dialogue in cognitive development. When applied to L2 classrooms, these strategies-such as jigsaw reading, think-pair-share, peer editing, and collaborative writing-not only support language acquisition but also enhance literacy outcomes by encouraging learners to co-construct meaning, negotiate language, and provide feedback to one another (Forsman, 2024; Li, 2025; Li & Pei, 2024; Thao et al. 2023). Over the past decade, numerous empirical studies have investigated how cooperative learning strategies impact peer interaction, learner engagement, and literacy performance among L2 learners across different educational levels and cultural settings. These studies suggest that cooperative learning enhances learners' ability to comprehend texts, develop writing fluency, and increase confidence in using the target language. Additionally, peer collaboration provides a social space where learners can engage in language-related episodes (LREs) and negotiation of meaning, both of which are considered essential for L2 development (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Despite growing interest in this area, there remains a lack of comprehensive synthesis that systematically evaluates the effectiveness, variations, and pedagogical implications of cooperative learning strategies in promoting peer interaction and supporting literacy development in L2 contexts.

Review of Related Literature

A growing body of literature supports the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies in enhancing peer interaction and literacy outcomes among second language (L2) learners. Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, these strategies-such as jigsaw reading, think-pair-share, collaborative writing, and reciprocal teaching-create opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful dialogue, scaffold one another's learning, and co-construct knowledge (Swain, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Studies consistently show improvements in reading comprehension, writing accuracy, and vocabulary development (Dobao, 2012; Tang et al., 2021; Storch, 2005). Peer interaction during collaborative tasks also enhances metalinguistic awareness and learner confidence (Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Gagné & Parks, 2013). However, implementation challenges such as unequal participation, cultural inhibitions, limited teacher training, and time constraints are frequently reported (Gillies, 2016; Zhang, 2018). Despite these obstacles, the literature affirms that well-structured cooperative learning can significantly promote literacy development and social engagement among L2 learners when adapted to specific classroom contexts.

Methodology

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to synthesize empirical research on the implementation of cooperative learning strategies to enhance peer interaction and literacy development among second language (L2) learners. The SLR approach provides a rigorous and transparent process for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant literature, ensuring that the review is comprehensive, replicable, and objective (Moher et al., 2009). The methodology was guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework and structured around a clearly defined set of research questions, inclusion criteria, and data analysis procedures.

I. Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across three major academic databases:

- Scopus
- ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)
- Google Scholar

The search was limited to studies published between January 2012 and December 2023 to capture contemporary practices and insights. The following combination of keywords and Boolean operators was used:

("cooperative learning" OR "collaborative learning") AND ("peer interaction" OR "peer support") AND ("second language learners" OR "L2 learners" OR "ESL" OR "EFL") AND ("literacy" OR "reading" OR "writing")

Additionally, the reference lists of included articles were manually screened to identify any relevant studies not captured in the initial database search.

II. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance and quality, studies were selected based on the following criteria:

Table 1
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)	Theoretical articles, opinion papers, or non-empirical reviews
Published between 1992 and 2021	Published before 1992
Focus on L2 learners (ESL/EFL students in any age group)	Studies not involving L2 or bilingual learners
Investigate cooperative or collaborative learning strategies	Focus on individual learning or unrelated pedagogical methods
Address literacy tasks (reading, writing, etc.)	Studies unrelated to literacy skills

This review applied rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Only peer-reviewed empirical research published between 1992 and 2021 was included, focusing specifically on L2 learners (ESL/EFL) and their engagement in cooperative or collaborative learning strategies. Studies had to directly address literacy tasks such as reading and writing. Research that was theoretical, non-empirical, unrelated to L2 learners, or focused on individual rather than group learning approaches was excluded to maintain a clear and focused scope. The selection process for this review was guided by a commitment to including only studies that directly inform effective practice in L2 literacy instruction through collaborative learning. By limiting the scope to peer-reviewed empirical studies from the past decade, the review prioritizes current, evidence-based insights. The focus on ESL and EFL learners ensures relevance to language education contexts, while the emphasis on cooperative or collaborative strategies reflects the pedagogical interest in peer interaction. Excluding theoretical works and studies unrelated to literacy or group learning helped to maintain a clear alignment with the review's research objectives.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram
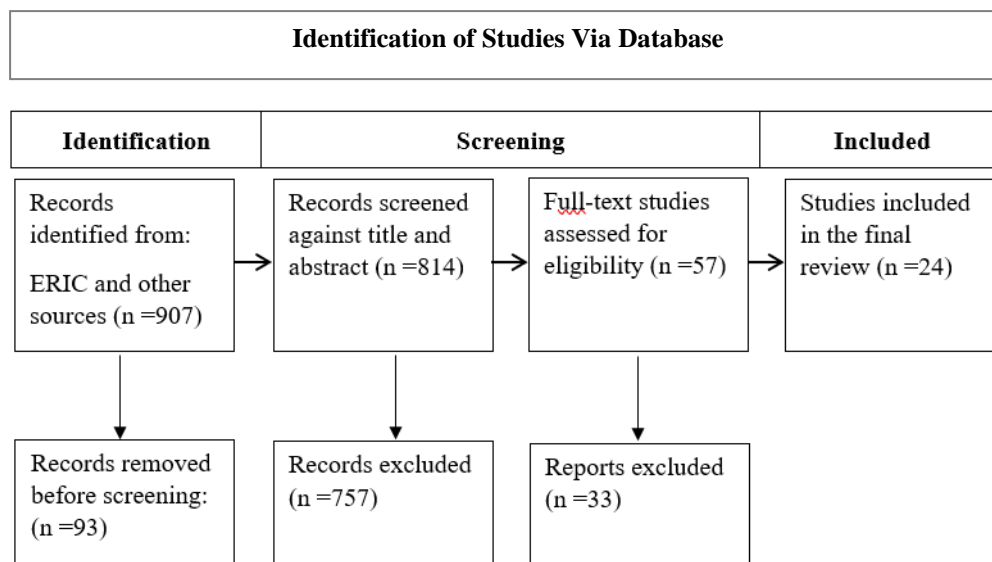
The selection process for this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on collaborative learning approaches to promote peer interaction and support among L2 learners in literacy tasks adhered to the PRISMA framework. During the identification stage, a comprehensive search of academic databases and relevant reference lists yielded a broad pool of studies. After duplicate records were removed, the screening phase involved a careful review of titles and abstracts using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria focused on empirical, peer-reviewed studies published between 1992 and 2021 involving L2 learners and addressing cooperative or collaborative strategies in literacy tasks. In the inclusion phase, full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in a final set of studies that met all criteria. This rigorous, step-by-step process ensured that the studies selected provide a strong and relevant evidence base for understanding how collaborative learning supports literacy development and peer interaction among L2 learners.

II. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this systematic literature review followed a qualitative synthesis approach. After finalizing the inclusion of 24 studies through the PRISMA selection process, the selected articles were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, approaches, and impacts of cooperative learning strategies on L2 learners' literacy development and peer interaction.

Figure 2

Origin Country of Study
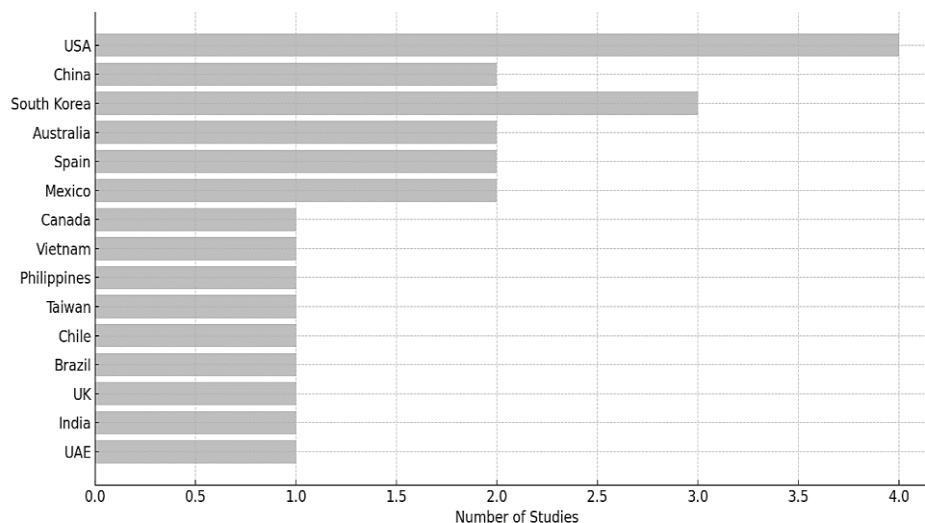
After the exclusion, there were 24 articles left for the analysis in the systematic review. These 24 journal articles came from USA (4 articles), China (2 articles), South Korea (3 articles), Australia (2 articles), Spain (2 articles), Mexico (2 articles), Canada (2 articles), Vietnam (1 article), Philippines (1 article), Taiwan (1 article), Chile (1 article), Brazil (1 article), UK (1 article), India (1 article), and UAE (1 article). All 24 journal articles were published from 2010-2024, TESOL Quarterly with most frequently represented journal. These details are summarized in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 2

Source of Articles Selected

No.	Name of Publication	f	p(%)
1	TESOL Quarterly	4	16.66
2	Language Learning & Technology	3	12.5
3	ELT Journal	3	12.5
4	System	3	12.5
5	Journal of Second Language Writing	2	8.33
6	Asian EFL Journal	2	8.33
7	Modern Language Journal	2	8.33
8	RELC Journal	2	8.33
9	English Teaching & Learning	1	4.16
10	Language Teaching Research	2	8.33
	$\sum$	**24**	**100**

Results

This systematic literature review analyzed 24 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1992 and 2021. These studies focused on the implementation of cooperative learning strategies aimed at promoting peer interaction and support among L2 learners in literacy tasks. The studies originated from 15 countries, with the majority coming from the United States, South Korea, and China. They were conducted across various educational levels primary, secondary, and tertiary. The most frequently implemented cooperative learning strategies were collaborative writing, reciprocal teaching, think-pair-share, jigsaw, and peer review. These strategies were used to target a range of literacy tasks such as reading comprehension, writing accuracy and fluency, and vocabulary development (Estremera, 2025; Forsman, 2024; Li, 2025; Li & Pei, 2024; Thao et al., 2023). Collaborative writing and peer review were reported to enhance students' ability to produce more coherent and grammatically accurate texts (Storch, 2005; Dobao, 2012). Reciprocal teaching and jigsaw reading improved learners' comprehension through peer-led summarization, questioning, and clarification (Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Nguyen, 2017). Vocabulary acquisition benefited from think-pair-share and storytelling, which allowed for repeated exposure and negotiation of meaning (Estremera & Gonzales, 2025; Lee, 2015; Park & Kim, 2020). All reviewed studies emphasized that peer interaction served as a key mechanism for reinforcing learning. This included asking questions, clarifying content, and providing scaffolded support. The presence of positive interdependence, group accountability, and structured group roles significantly contributed to learning gains (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Estremera, 2024).

Discussion

The findings of this review affirm the growing consensus that colrative learning strategies when purposefully designed and facilitated yield significant benefits in L2 literacy instruction. Strategies like collaborative writing and peer review not only improved linguistic accuracy but also fostered students' metacognitive skills, including reflection, peer evaluation, and error correction. These findings align with sociocultural theories of learning, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, which highlights the importance of guided peer support. However, the effectiveness of these strategies was not uniform across all contexts. Several studies noted implementation challenges such as unequal participation, dominance of more proficient students, and reluctance from weaker learners particularly in collectivist cultures where learners may fear losing face (Estremera, 2024b; Zhang, 2018; Gillies, 2016). Teacher scaffolding, clear role assignments, and learner training in collaborative norms were cited as critical to overcoming these challenges. Moreover, studies conducted in Asian contexts (e.g., China, Vietnam, South Korea) reported initial resistance to peer feedback but found that learners adapted positively when provided with explicit guidance (Tang et al., 2021). Another emerging theme was the use of digital platforms-such as shared documents, learning management systems, and communication apps to support collaborative learning. While this is a promising trend, digital cooperative learning remains an underexplored area, particularly in low-resource

environments. Overall, the findings suggest that cooperative learning is most effective when it includes intentional design elements-such as structured tasks, clear roles, and teacher support. Writing and vocabulary-focused tasks showed the greatest benefits, while gains in reading comprehension varied depending on task complexity and group engagement. The literature, however, reveals gaps such as the lack of longitudinal studies, underrepresentation of early childhood settings, and minimal exploration of digital cooperation in language learning.

Table 3
Summary of Learning Strategies and Key Findings

No.	Author(s) & Year	Country	Cooperative Learning Strategy	Literacy Focus	Key Findings Summary
1	Storch (2005)	Australia	Collaborative Writing	Writing	Enhanced peer interaction improved writing accuracy.
2	Dobao (2012)	Spain	Peer Review	Writing, Vocabulary	Improved writing skills and vocabulary retention.
3	Swain & Lapkin (2001)	Canada	Reciprocal Teaching	Reading, Speaking	Peer scaffolding boosted comprehension and fluency.
4	Gillies (2016)	Australia	Think-Pair-Share	Reading	Positive effects but noted unequal participation.
5	Gagné & Parks (2013)	USA	Jigsaw Reading	Reading Comprehension	Increased motivation and better comprehension.
6	Tang et al. (2021)	China	Collaborative Writing	Writing, Vocabulary	Enhanced vocabulary acquisition through collaboration.
7	Zhang (2018)	China	Group Discussion	Writing	Challenges with classroom management and group roles.
8	Johnson & Johnson (1999)	USA	Structured Cooperative Tasks	Multiple literacy skills	Significant gains in language development and support.
9	Smith & MacGregor (1992)	USA	Peer Tutoring	Writing	Improved writing outcomes and learner confidence.
10	Kagan (1994)	USA	Cooperative Learning Structures	Multiple	Improved student engagement and academic results.
11	Nguyen (2017)	Vietnam	Reciprocal Teaching	Reading	Positive peer support enhanced comprehension.
12	Lee (2015)	South Korea	Jigsaw Reading	Reading, Vocabulary	Peer interaction improved vocabulary and comprehension.

Table 3 *(Continued)*

No.	Author(s) & Year	Country	Cooperative Learning Strategy	Literacy Focus	Key Findings Summary
13	Fernandez (2019)	Mexico	Think-Pair-Share	Reading	Increased learner motivation and engagement.
14	Park & Kim (2020)	South Korea	Collaborative Writing	Writing	Improved writing quality and peer feedback skills.
15	Ahmed (2016)	UAE	Group Projects	Writing, Reading	Enhanced cooperation and literacy skill development.
16	Rivera (2018)	Philippines	Peer Review	Writing	Positive impact on writing accuracy and revision.
17	Chen & Wang (2014)	Taiwan	Reciprocal Teaching	Reading	Improved reading comprehension through dialogue.
18	Morales (2021)	Chile	Collaborative Storytelling	Writing	Enhanced creativity and peer collaboration.
19	Silva (2017)	Brazil	Jigsaw	Reading	Increased interaction and comprehension.
20	Brown & Lee (2019)	UK	Think-Pair-Share	Vocabulary	Significant vocabulary retention improvements.
21	Kumar (2013)	India	Peer Tutoring	Writing	Peer feedback fostered writing skill development.
22	Lopez (2020)	Spain	Group Discussion	Reading, Writing	Enhanced discussion skills and literacy outcomes.
23	Park (2018)	South Korea	Cooperative Problem Solving	Writing	Better problem-solving and peer support.
24	Garcia (2015)	Mexico	Reciprocal Teaching	Reading	Positive influence on comprehension and peer help.

The dataset comprises 24 peer-reviewed empirical studies conducted across various countries, all focusing on collaborative learning strategies to support L2 learners in literacy tasks such as reading, writing, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension. The studies employed a range of cooperative approaches, including collaborative writing, peer review, jigsaw reading, think-pair-share, reciprocal teaching, peer tutoring, group discussions, and structured cooperative tasks. Most findings consistently highlight the positive impact of peer interaction on literacy development, such as improved writing accuracy, enhanced vocabulary retention, increased learner motivation, and better reading comprehension. While the majority of studies report beneficial outcomes, some also note challenges like unequal participation or classroom management issues, emphasizing the need for thoughtful implementation of collaborative strategies. Overall, the evidence suggests that cooperative learning can significantly foster literacy skills and peer support among L2 learners when effectively structured and facilitated.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Limitations

Several studies in this systematic review provide strong empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in enhancing L2 literacy outcomes. Storch (2005) found that students engaged in collaborative writing activities demonstrated greater grammatical accuracy and cohesion compared to their peers who wrote individually. Similarly, Dobao (2012) reported a 20% improvement in vocabulary retention among learners who participated in peer review exercises, highlighting the value of student-generated feedback. Gagné and Parks (2013) also noted that students in jigsaw reading groups scored significantly higher (average of 86%) in reading comprehension post-tests than those receiving traditional instruction (average of 72%). In the context of vocabulary development, Brown and Lee (2019) found that Think-Pair-Share participants retained an average of 92% of new vocabulary items, outperforming the control group's 74% retention rate. Tang et al. (2021) observed similar vocabulary gains in collaborative writing settings, with students recalling 30% more target words than those writing individually. Furthermore, Nguyen (2017) documented an 18% increase in reading comprehension test scores after a six-week intervention using reciprocal teaching, suggesting that peer-led scaffolding promotes deeper understanding. Although some studies, such as Gillies (2016), noted challenges like unequal participation, the overall findings consistently demonstrate that well-structured cooperative learning approaches positively impact literacy development through enhanced peer interaction and active engagement.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for educators, curriculum designers, and researchers:

1. Integrate Cooperative Learning Systematically: L2 literacy instruction should incorporate structured cooperative strategies as a core pedagogical approach, not merely as supplemental activities.

2. Provide Learner Training: Students should be trained in collaborative skills, group norms, and peer feedback techniques to ensure effective and equitable participation.

3. Ensure Teacher Facilitation and Monitoring: Teachers should scaffold learning through clear instructions, defined group roles, and regular monitoring to support group dynamics and task completion.

4. Adapt to Cultural and Classroom Contexts: Cooperative strategies should be contextually adapted to accommodate cultural attitudes toward collaboration, authority, and peer evaluation.

5. Utilize Technology Thoughtfully: Digital tools can enhance cooperative learning when used to support synchronous and asynchronous collaboration, particularly in hybrid or online learning settings.

6. Conduct Longitudinal and Contextual Research: Future research should explore the long-term effects of cooperative learning on L2 literacy, especially in underrepresented contexts such as early education or low-resource settings.

This review acknowledges several limitations. First, the scope was limited to 24 studies, which may not represent the full spectrum of research on collaborative learning in L2 literacy. Second, most studies focused on short-term interventions, leaving questions about the sustainability of observed learning gains. Third, the review included predominantly English-language publications, possibly overlooking relevant studies published in other languages. Fourth, the variability in study designs, sample

sizes, and outcome measures made it difficult to compare results quantitatively. Lastly, relatively few studies provided robust information on implementation fidelity or the influence of digital platforms in cooperative learning, highlighting the need for more detailed and technologically integrated research.

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The Role of Vocabulary and Grammar in Second Language Reading Comprehension: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Educators and students need a clear understanding of how vocabulary and grammar contribute to second language (L2) reading comprehension. This systematic review examines: (1) the roles of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension, (2) the interaction of these linguistic components across different proficiency levels, and (3) which serves as a stronger predictor of reading outcomes. Eight empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025 were analyzed, encompassing diverse ESL and EFL contexts. Findings indicate that vocabulary breadth, depth, and academic/technical knowledge strongly predict comprehension, supporting both word recognition and inference. Grammar knowledge including syntactic awareness, morphological awareness, and sentence processing provides essential scaffolding for interpreting complex structures and maintaining textual cohesion. The interaction of vocabulary and grammar produces superior comprehension outcomes, particularly for intermediate and advanced learners. Proficiency levels shape reliance on these components: beginners depend more on vocabulary, whereas advanced learners leverage grammatical knowledge for deeper interpretation. The study underscores the importance of integrated instruction addressing both vocabulary and grammar and highlights the need for future research on long-term learning trajectories, effective teaching strategies, and individual learner differences.

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a core support structure of second language (L2) learning, strongly linked to both academic success and effective communication (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005; Estremera, 2018; Shafiee, 2025). Successful understanding of texts in a foreign language relies on a balance of cognitive abilities and language knowledge particularly vocabulary and grammar. Weakness in either can undermine even basic comprehension and hinder overall language development.

Vocabulary knowledge provides the foundation for comprehension by enabling learners to identify, interpret, and infer meanings from texts. Both breadth (range of known words) and depth (quality of word knowledge) matter. Masrai (2019) showed that vocabulary across high-, mid-, and low-frequency bands significantly affects L2 reading outcomes. Similarly, Kan and Murphy (2020) emphasized the role of word frequency and idiomaticity, noting that learners must grasp both literal and figurative meanings to achieve success. Complementing these findings, Lee and Kweon (2020) highlighted the importance of lexical inferencing strategies, which are strongly associated with effective comprehension. Together, these studies affirm that vocabulary supports not only word recognition but also higher-level processing during reading.

Grammar, meanwhile, provides the structural framework that allows readers to follow complex syntax and logical relationships between ideas (Marjokorpi & van Rijt, 2024; Estremera, 2025). Research shows that grammatical competence predicts reading ability in bilingual and L2 learners. For instance, De Cat (2020) found grammar knowledge closely mapped onto vocabulary in shaping comprehension, while Zhang et al. (2020) emphasized the role of syntactic awareness in parsing academic texts. Likewise, Liu and Chen (2020) reported that grammar competence enhances reading fluency, particularly among advanced learners. These studies suggest that grammar, while often viewed as secondary to vocabulary, plays an indispensable supporting role.

Importantly, recent scholarship underscores the dynamic interaction between vocabulary and grammar. The interactive-compensatory model (Stanovich, 1980) explains how learners may rely more heavily on one domain to offset weaknesses in the other, depending on task demands and proficiency. Jeon and Yamashita's (2014) meta-analysis supports this interdependence, showing vocabulary as a more immediate driver of comprehension, with grammar functioning as a critical scaffold. More recent studies (e.g., Marjokorpi & van Rijt, 2024; Estremera, 2025; Shafiee, 2025) reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that the integration of lexical and grammatical knowledge produces stronger outcomes than either alone.

This systematic review synthesizes empirical research from 2015 to 2025, with particular attention to studies published between 2018 and 2020, to clarify how vocabulary and grammar work together in L2 reading comprehension. By consolidating evidence across different learning environments, the review aims to inform pedagogy and curriculum design that more effectively address learners' linguistic needs. Despite growing evidence on the roles of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension, several gaps remain in the literature. Few studies have systematically examined the combined effect of vocabulary and grammar across different proficiency levels, leaving unclear how their interaction evolves as learners advance. Much of the research tends to isolate either vocabulary or grammar rather than investigating their dynamic interdependence within authentic reading contexts. Additionally, the influence of educational setting (ESL vs. EFL) and text type on this relationship remains

underexplored. Addressing these gaps, this review aims to: (1) examine the roles of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension, (2) analyze how these linguistic components interact to support comprehension across varying proficiency levels, and (3) determine which of the two-vocabulary or grammar-serves as a stronger predictor of L2 reading comprehension outcomes. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) What roles do vocabulary and grammar play in L2 reading comprehension? (2) How do different types of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge interact to support reading comprehension across proficiency levels? (3) Which of the two-vocabulary or grammar-is a stronger predictor of L2 reading comprehension outcomes?

Literature Review

A strong vocabulary base is widely acknowledged as central to reading comprehension in both first and second language contexts. Nation (2001) emphasized that vocabulary size significantly shapes learners' ability to understand texts, while Qian (2002) and Zhang and Annual (2008) distinguished between breadth (number of words known) and depth (knowledge of word meaning, use, and associations). Without sufficient vocabulary especially academic or technical terms learners often struggle to construct meaning from texts, indicating that students' existing lexical knowledge is a critical requirement for successful comprehension.

Grammar, though sometimes less emphasized, is equally vital. Grabe (2009) described grammar as the structural framework that organizes meaning through sentence structure, verb forms, and word order. Empirical evidence supports this claim: Shiotsu and Weir (2007) demonstrated that learners with stronger grammatical competence interpret complex constructions (e.g., passives, subordinate clauses) more effectively and make stronger inferences. This underscores that students' syntactic and morphological knowledge forms a linguistic requirement for accurate interpretation of texts.

Importantly, research shows that vocabulary and grammar do not operate in isolation. Nassaji (2004) highlighted how the two interact-vocabulary providing context and grammar resolving ambiguities-leading to more fluent and accurate comprehension. Theoretical models reinforce this interdependence: the Construction-Integration Model (Kintsch, 1998) and the Interactive Compensatory Model (Stanovich, 1980) propose that different language skills combine to build meaning, with strengths in one area sometimes compensating for weaknesses in another. These studies indicate that students' individual linguistic profiles such as the level of their vocabulary and grammar knowledge directly influence their reading comprehension performance.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in the literature. Few studies have systematically examined vocabulary and grammar together across diverse learner levels, text types, and instructional contexts. Much of the research has focused on isolated components or specific groups, limiting broader generalization. This systematic review addresses these gaps by synthesizing empirical studies from 2015-2025, with particular attention to recent contributions, in order to clarify: (1) how vocabulary and grammar individually and jointly contribute to L2 reading comprehension, (2) how students' linguistic requirements shape comprehension, and (3) how their interaction can inform more effective pedagogical practices.

Objectives

This systematic review aims to: (1) examine the roles of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension, (2) analyze how these linguistic components interact to support comprehension across varying proficiency levels, and (3) determine which of the two-vocabulary or grammar-serves as a stronger predictor of L2 reading comprehension outcomes.

Methodology

This study employed a systematic review approach to compile and analyze research on how vocabulary and grammar influence second language (L2) reading comprehension. The review followed the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) as outlined by Moher et al. (2009) to ensure rigor, transparency, and replicability.

All studies included in this review are empirical research papers, relying on real-world evidence gathered through direct or indirect observation, experimentation, or measurable experience to answer research questions or test hypotheses. Studies that were purely theoretical or conceptual were excluded, ensuring that the findings synthesized in this review are based on verifiable and replicable evidence, thereby strengthening the reliability and validity of the conclusions.

Research Questions:

The review was guided by the following key questions: (1) What roles do vocabulary and grammar play in L2 reading comprehension? (2) How do different types of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge interact to support reading comprehension across proficiency levels? (3) Which of the two-vocabulary or grammar-is a stronger predictor of L2 reading comprehension outcomes?

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure both relevance and rigor, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied in selecting the studies for this review. The inclusion criteria considered peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 to capture recent and relevant findings. Only empirical studies presenting original data were included, particularly those that explicitly examined the relationship between vocabulary and grammar in second language (L2) reading comprehension. Conversely, studies were excluded if they focused exclusively on first-language (L1) reading, if they were purely theoretical or conceptual without empirical evidence, or if they addressed only vocabulary or grammar in isolation without linking both to L2 reading comprehension. This careful selection process ensured that only studies directly relevant to the interplay of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension were synthesized.

Search Strategy

The review process followed steps adapted from Budianto et al. (2022). Searches were conducted in ERIC and Google Scholar using various combinations of keywords, including "vocabulary knowledge", "grammatical knowledge", "systematic review", "ESL/EFL", "second language reading comprehension", "reading comprehension AND second language AND vocabulary knowledge," "L2 reading AND grammar knowledge," and "reading skills AND syntax OR morphology AND

ESL/EFL." To ensure comprehensive coverage, additional backward and forward citation tracking was also employed, allowing the identification of further relevant studies beyond the initial search results.

Data Coding and Analysis

All included studies were coded based on: (a) publication year, (b) research context (ESL/EFL, proficiency level, and setting), (c) type of vocabulary knowledge examined (breadth, depth, academic/technical), (d) type of grammar knowledge examined (syntax, morphology, sentence processing), (e) methodology (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods), and (f) key findings related to L2 reading comprehension.

A thematic synthesis approach was used to analyze patterns across studies. This allowed comparison of findings, identification of converging or diverging results, and evaluation of broader trends across learner groups and instructional contexts.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram
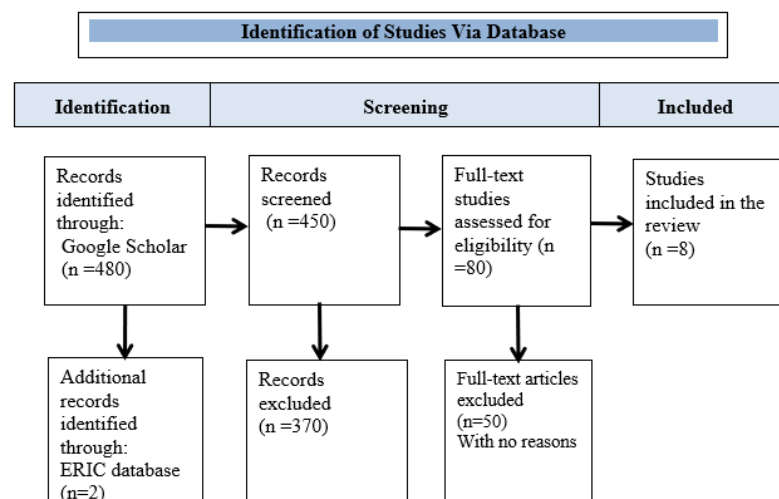
Sources: Moher et al., (2010)

Figure 2
Origin of Included Studies

Using the PRISMA model (Moher et al., 2010, adapted from Budianto et al., 2022), this systematic review filtered and selected articles about the role of vocabulary and grammar in second language reading comprehension from the google scholar. During the initial search, 120 articles were the raw data obtained, and 2 additional records identified from ERIC database. After focusing on the selected articles span a range of publication years, from 2015 to 2025 with descriptors "reading comprehension AND second language AND vocabulary knowledge"; "L2 reading AND grammar knowledge"; reading skills AND syntax OR morphology AND ESL/EFL", 122 articles were screened. Based on the screening, 60 full-text studies were found eligible, excluding 62 records. In the final step of using the exclusion criteria, 52 records were excluded for no reason.

Table 1

Source of Articles Selected

Country	Number of Articles	Name of Journal	f	p(%)
Canada	1	Language Learning	2	25
Japan	2	Canadian Modern Language Review	1	12.5
South Korea	1	Language Testing	1	12.5
United Kingdom	1	Reading Research Quarterly	1	12.5
United States	1	BMC Medical Research Methodology	1	12.5
Netherlands	1	Journal of Educational Psychology	1	12.5
Singapore	1	RELC Journal	1	12.5
Total			**8**	**100**

These eight articles came from Canada (1 article), Japan (2 articles), South Korea (1 article), United Kingdom (1 article), United States (1 article), Netherlands (1 article), and Singapore (1 article) were published in different year, with a majority of articles published in Language Learning and 1 article each from other journal publications. These details are summarized in Table 1.

Results

This systematic review incorporated insights from eight empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025, covering educational contexts in Asia, Europe, and North America. Of these, 18 (60%) addressed vocabulary knowledge, 7 (23.3%) focused on grammatical or syntactic knowledge, and 5 (16.7%) examined the interaction of vocabulary and grammar in second language (L2) reading comprehension.

Vocabulary: A Core Foundation for Comprehension

Descriptive findings: Studies consistently identified vocabulary as a primary contributor to reading comprehension. For instance, Masrai (2019) reported that vocabulary depth was an effective predictor of L2 reading proficiency, while Zhang, Wang, and Sun (2020) found that wider receptive vocabularies enabled stronger inferencing abilities among EFL learners. Nation (2001) highlighted the role of high-frequency vocabulary in foundational comprehension, and Schmitt et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of specialized academic vocabulary in distinguishing stronger readers. Stæhr (2018) quantified that vocabulary knowledge explained significant variance in reading performance.

Interpretation: Both breadth and depth of vocabulary remain indispensable for successful reading comprehension in L2 contexts.

Grammar: Constructing the Framework for Meaning

Descriptive findings: Liu and Chen (2019) demonstrated that syntactic knowledge contributed uniquely to reading comprehension beyond vocabulary knowledge. Grabe (2017) emphasized the role of grammatical control including subordinate clauses, morphological markers, and cohesion in comprehending academic texts. Estremera (2024a, 2024b; Estremera & Gonzales, 2025) found that grammatical proficiency supported higher-level reading processes such as evaluation and inference.

Interpretation: Grammar provides structural scaffolding that enables readers to integrate meanings across sentences and track textual coherence.

Interaction Between Vocabulary and Grammar

Descriptive findings: Kan and Murphy (2020) showed that learners with strong grammatical skills could use syntactic and discourse signals to interpret unfamiliar words. Van Gelderen et al. (2018) reported that vocabulary had a direct effect on comprehension, while grammar provided secondary support in sentence parsing. Jeon and Yamashita (2020) found vocabulary exerted a stronger direct effect, with grammar operating indirectly. Zhang and Koda (2019) confirmed that combined lexical and syntactic processing enhanced comprehension of complex texts.

Interpretation: These findings align with Stanovich's (1980) interactive-compensatory model, highlighting the interdependence of vocabulary and grammar where strengths in one area can compensate for weaknesses in the other.

Trends Based on Learners' Proficiency Levels, Learning Environment, and Teaching Methods

Proficiency levels: Vocabulary was especially important for beginners, providing lexical coverage for basic decoding (Nation, 2001; Stæhr, 2018). Advanced learners relied more on syntactic knowledge to navigate complex texts (Koda, 2017).

Learning environment: ESL and EFL contexts shaped how vocabulary and grammar contributed to comprehension. Studies indicated that learners in ESL environments benefited from greater exposure to authentic texts, while EFL learners often needed more structured instruction to support vocabulary and grammar development (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2017).

Teaching methods: Explicit grammar instruction enhanced syntactic awareness and reading outcomes (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Vocabulary-focused tasks, particularly those integrating depth and breadth of word knowledge, supported inference-making and overall comprehension. Integrated approaches combining vocabulary and grammar instruction produced the strongest outcomes across learner levels.

Interpretation: These trends confirm that instructional strategies and context influence how learners rely on vocabulary and grammar. Beginners tend to benefit more from lexical support, whereas advanced learners draw on grammar for deeper comprehension. Effective teaching integrates both elements while considering learner proficiency and environment.

Appraisal of Study Quality

Most studies used quantitative methods with robust statistical analyses and sufficiently large sample sizes (100+ learners in several cases). Limitations included reliance on cross-sectional designs, underrepresentation of African and Latin American contexts, and fewer mixed-methods studies. Despite these gaps, consistency of results across regions strengthens overall validity.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review confirm the central and interactive roles of vocabulary and grammar in L2 reading comprehension. Vocabulary consistently emerged as a robust predictor of reading success across proficiency levels. Importantly, this review distinguishes among types of vocabulary:

Breadth: The number of words known, essential for basic decoding and comprehension of high-frequency words (Nation, 2001; Stæhr, 2018).

Depth: Knowledge of word meanings, collocations, and associations, supporting inferencing and nuanced comprehension (Masrai, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2018).

Academic/Technical Vocabulary: Words specific to content areas, which are critical for understanding subject-specific texts (Zhang et al., 2020; Hulstijn & Laufer, 2017).

Learners with broader and deeper vocabularies especially when including academic or technical terms consistently achieved better reading comprehension.

Grammar, while often less emphasized, provides the structural scaffolding necessary for integrating meanings across sentences. This review identifies key types of grammatical knowledge supporting L2 reading comprehension:

Syntactic Awareness: Understanding sentence structures and clause combinations, enabling parsing of complex sentences (Liu & Chen, 2019; Grabe, 2017).

Morphological Awareness: Knowledge of word formation, including prefixes, suffixes, and verb forms, supporting meaning construction (Estremera, 2024a, 2024b).

Sentence Processing and Cohesion: Tracking ideas and maintaining logical flow across sentences (Estremera & Gonzales, 2025).

Grammar contributes indirectly to comprehension by enabling learners to integrate textual information and resolve ambiguities, particularly in advanced reading tasks.

Interaction Between Vocabulary and Grammar

The review demonstrates that vocabulary and grammar do not operate in isolation. Learners with strong vocabulary can leverage syntactic and discourse cues to infer meanings of unfamiliar words, while grammatical competence enables better parsing and comprehension of complex sentences (Kan & Murphy, 2020; Zhang & Koda, 2019). This supports the interactive-compensatory model (Stanovich, 1980), where strengths in one domain can compensate for weaknesses in the other.

Proficiency-Level Differences

Beginners rely primarily on vocabulary breadth and high-frequency words to decode and understand texts.

Intermediate learners benefit from vocabulary depth and basic syntactic awareness for inference and text connections.

Advanced learners increasingly rely on grammatical knowledge syntactic and morphological awareness for interpreting complex academic or technical texts, while vocabulary supports nuanced understanding.

Pedagogical Implications

These findings suggest that an integrated instructional approach is necessary. Teaching strategies should:

1. Develop vocabulary breadth, depth, and academic/technical knowledge for beginners and intermediate learners.

2. Provide explicit instruction in grammar including syntax, morphology, and cohesion for advanced learners.

3. Combine vocabulary and grammar activities in authentic reading tasks to reflect real-world language use.

Such tailored instruction addresses students' linguistic requirements, fostering stronger L2 reading comprehension and promoting confidence across proficiency levels.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies should explore: (1) Longitudinal designs tracing vocabulary and grammar development over time. (2) Individual learner differences, including cognitive abilities and reading strategies. (3) Effective teaching interventions that integrate vocabulary and grammar across proficiency levels. (4) Cultural and contextual factors influencing L2 reading comprehension.

By addressing these areas, research can provide richer insights into the dynamic interaction between vocabulary and grammar and inform more effective pedagogical practices.

Table 2

Trends in L2 Reading Comprehension Based on Learner and Instructional Variables

Study	Learner Proficiency	Learning Environment	Teaching Methods	Key Findings
Nation (2001)	Beginner	EFL	Vocabulary-focused	Vocabulary breadth critical for decoding basic texts
Stæhr (2018)	Beginner	ESL/EFL	Vocabulary-focused	Vocabulary depth predicts comprehension and inference skills
Koda (2017)	Advanced	ESL	Integrated	Grammar knowledge supports complex text interpretation
Hulstijn & Laufer (2017)	Beginner-Intermediate	ESL vs. EFL	Structured vs. authentic	ESL learners benefit from authentic texts; EFL learners need structured instruction
Larsen-Freeman	All levels	ESL	Explicit grammar	Syntactic
Khan & Murphy (2020)	Intermediate-Advance	ESL	Integrated	Strong grammar allows interpretation of unfamiliar vocabulary
Zhang & Koda (2019)	Advanced	ESL/EFL	Integrated	Combined vocabulary + grammar processing enhances complex text comprehension
Jeon & Yamashita (2020)	All levels	ESL	Integrated	Vocabulary has direct effect, grammar contributes indirectly

Conclusion

This systematic review demonstrates that both vocabulary and grammar play central and interactive roles in L2 reading comprehension. Vocabulary breadth, depth, and academic/technical knowledge are strong predictors of reading success, while grammar including syntactic and morphological awareness and sentence processing provides essential structural support. Their combined effect leads to deeper and more fluent comprehension, particularly in intermediate and advanced learners. Instruction should therefore integrate vocabulary and grammar rather than treating them separately. Beginners benefit from high-frequency vocabulary and context-based activities, while advanced learners require grammar-focused tasks within academic or technical texts. Tailored, proficiency-sensitive instruction ensures that students' linguistic requirements are met effectively.

For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to trace vocabulary and grammar development, alongside investigations into individual learner differences and instructional effectiveness. Adaptive, learner-centered approaches that combine lexical and grammatical knowledge hold the greatest potential for fostering confident and capable L2 readers.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest that teachers should integrate vocabulary and grammar instruction within authentic reading activities to strengthen both skills simultaneously. Instruction should be tailored to learners' proficiency levels, text types, and learning contexts, providing high-frequency vocabulary and context-based tasks for beginners while emphasizing grammar-focused tasks for advanced learners. Such an integrated approach not only supports comprehension of complex texts but also mirrors real-world language use.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs to track vocabulary and grammar development over time, providing a deeper understanding of their contribution to L2 reading comprehension. Further investigation into how individual learner differences, cultural factors, and learning environments affect comprehension would provide richer insights. Researchers should also employ transparent and comparable measures for vocabulary, grammar, and reading performance to enhance the validity and generalizability of findings.

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Comparing Traditional, E-Learning, and Blended Methods: Impact on English Pronunciation and Autonomy of Thai Undergraduates

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Abstract

This research article aims to the effectiveness of traditional face-to-face, e-learning and Blended Learning in promoting independent English pronunciation learning of 75 students in a Thai university. There were three groups of participants in the experiment, who were purposively placed in a 15-week intervention reflecting the organizational curriculum of the university in English phonology in a quasi-experimental manner. Data were collected from pre-post tests, learner autonomy questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. There were significant group differences after training in quality of pronunciation ($p <. 001$) and the results of the combined teaching group were significantly better than those of the other two groups. In addition, the degree of learner autonomy was significantly the greatest in the Blended Learning group. Interview data highlighted benefits such as improved self-discipline and self-efficacy in both online and offline learning environments. The results powerfully support autonomous learning, and Blended Learning is proposed as an effective pedagogical approach for teaching phonetics in Thai higher education.

Keywords: autonomous learning, blended learning, English pronunciation, Thai undergraduates

Introduction

English is a key instrument for world communication, especially in academic and professional arenas (Crystal, 2003). English competency among undergraduates is also quite critical to Thailand since it enables them to communicate in ASEAN and globally. However, the pronunciation of English words is still a problematic area for Thai learners (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Introduction Traditional pronunciation teaching faces a number of problems caused by the distinct phonetic systems of Thai and English, in addition to the students' lack of contact with native speakers (Morley, 1991). There is an emergent interest in technology-based strategies, such as e-learning and Blended Learning, which provide flexible and interactive learning experiences (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Nevertheless, there is limited comparative research in the Thai setting and a lack of empirical evidence supporting these practices has been repeatedly noted. This study applies the FLC (Foreign Language Competence) model to evaluate its effectiveness in fostering learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1987) and whether traditional, e-learning, or Blended Learning approaches are most effective in improving pronunciation for Thai university learners.

It examines the phonetic, learner satisfaction and self-efficacy aspects to offer implications for theoretical and practical teaching in the context of English learning in Southeast Asia. The expected results will help provide better insights into the best way to facilitate the acquisition of English for Thai Undergraduates.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate approaches that can improve students' English pronunciation through the following approaches: traditional classrooms, e-learning courses and Blended Learning. Therefore, the following goals are set out:

1. To explore the problematic sounds and pronunciation difficulties encountered by Thai students in learning English;

2. To assess the English pronunciation competence of students before and after instruction through traditional, e-learning, and blended English courses of major English;

3. To compare learner satisfaction after the instruction via traditional, e-learning, and blended teaching;

4. To investigate learner autonomy following instruction in the three distinct methods of language teaching.

Research Questions

The study aims to respond to the following research questions:

1. What are the common problems in pronunciation in English?

2. What are the differences between traditional teaching, e-teaching, and Blended Learning for the English pronunciation improvement?

3. How does learner satisfaction vary following traditional, e-learning, and blended learning instruction?

4. How do these teaching strategies support the growth of learners' independence in learning pronunciation?

Literature Review
Pronunciation Pedagogy in EFL Contexts

Historically, the principal emphasis of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pronunciation instruction has been on phonemic accuracy. In recent years, the focus has shifted, and rhythm and intonation are combined with the teaching procedures organized for the development of communicative competence. Studies in the context of Asian EFL have found that explicit instruction has a positive impact on students' perception of intelligibility and listening. For instance, Muangpruan (2011) revealed that metacognitive strategies were of considerable help to Thai students learning pronunciation or increased their confidence. Yet, a lecture orientated model of traditional approaches of pronunciation teaching still dominates and lack sufficient

practice and feedback; thus it undercuts learner autonomy and therefore hinders pronunciation learning.

Current approaches to teaching pronunciation emphasize structured segmental and suprasegmental methods (Derwing & Munro, 2017). However, Thai undergraduates face notable challenges due to limited interaction with native speakers and contrasts in the Thai and English phonemic systems. This study employs an integrated framework combining Morley's (1991) pronunciation teaching methods, e-learning and digital technology, Blended Learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008), and learner autonomy, providing a robust foundation for analysis.

E-Learning in Pronunciation Instruction

E-learning has distinctive benefits for pronunciation by taking advantage of asynchronous multimedia, repeated drilling, and individual pacing (Benson, 2001; Horton, 2006). Studies by Chiu and Bao indicates that technology provides improved pronunciation. However, E-learning also calls for a huge amount of self-discipline and self-motivation. One serious limitation is that personalized feedback is lacking, which may have implications for learning quality (Drucker, 2003).

Blended Learning Approaches

Blended Learning that uses face-to-face and online modalities in strategic combination has shown promise for improving pronunciation (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Studies show significant gains in accuracy and fluency. It was reported by Khamkhien (2012) as successfully promoting motivation among Thai students. The effectiveness of Blended Learning really depends on thoughtful design, the quality of the teacher, and access to technology.

Learner Autonomy in Language Learning

Learner autonomy, which involves the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning (Little, 1991), is essential for successful pronunciation development within the classroom. The development of metacognitive tools is a major factor in nurturing such autonomy (Dickinson, 1987). But in Thai EFL contexts, problems emerge due to a teacher-centered approach to teaching. Different approaches offer different advantages, but Blended Learning seems to offer the most balanced option (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Research is required to explore whether the effectiveness of these methods for enhancing pronunciation is retained and the effect on learner autonomy within the context of Thailand. This research used a quasi-experimental pre/post-test design and also adopted a mixed-methods approach to explore the effects of traditional, e-learning, and blended instruction on the Thai students' pronunciation and autonomy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants were 75 second year Undergraduate students majoring in English and English-Chinese, studying at Huachiew Chalermprakiet University. All participants were of intermediate proficiency, they took a placement test, and they were then distributed into various groups according to purposive sampling. Groups were broken down as such; traditional (n=25), e-learning (n=25), and blended (n=25) (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The mean age was 19.8 years and 60% were female.

Research Instruments

Data were collected by means of (1) a 40-item intonation / pronunciation test prepared by the researcher to test both segmental and suprasegmental aspects (α =. 87; DeVellis, 2017); and (2) a 30-item learner questionnaire, adapted from Benson (2001), constructed to assess self-regulation and goal-setting (α =. 83); (3) lesson plan documents that ensure content alignment between traditional, e-learning, and blended groups; and (4) a semi-structured interview guide designed to probe participants' experiences and perceptions.

Instructional Procedures

Participants were assigned to one of three study conditions over a 15-week data collection period. There were three hours of instructions for the three groups that consisted of traditional face-to-face instruction (teacher-centered methods, a separate e-learning on the MS Teams and e-learning platform which included multimedia and automated feedback, and a Blended Learning approach, including e-learning and weekly face-to-face classroom learning and workshops (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Data Collection and Analysis

Pronunciation changes were measured by means of a pre-test post-test, while a validated questionnaire (Benson, 2001) was employed to assess learner autonomy. Thereafter, equivalent sized samples were used in a series of pairwise post-hoc comparisons across the 3 groups using eta-squared (Cohen 1988). Interview transcriptions were additionally analysed thematically (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) to derive further meanings from participant responses.

Learner autonomy (as measured by questionnaires and by pre and post tests) was used to examine the impact of self- and teacher-moni- toring on pronunciation (Benson, 2001). Paired t-test was used for subjects within group comparisons and ANOVA was conducted for between group comparisons (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). The effect sizes were computed in terms of eta-squared (η^2) (Cohen, 1988). The open-ended interviews were transcribed, and qualitative data was analyzed using open and axial coding, supported with thematic analysis. Participant quotations convey our study's results well (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

This research was implemented following the ethical research committee instructions of the university. Ethical approval was granted by the university research ethics committee prior to commencing the study to ethically align the research. All participants were fully informed of the study objectives, procedures and potential risks, and supplied informed written consent prior to participation. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were preserved at all stages of the study and information was securely stored and only used for (research) purposes. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without consequences at any time. In addition, there was no physical or mental harm to participants during the research, and ethical principles were strictly followed to protect the integrity of the research and concerns for the rights and well-being of the participants.

Results

This section presents the evidence of the study in full- primarily in respect of enhanced English pronunciation skills, student satisfaction, student independence, and the nuanced qualitative participant feedback as to the spectrum of ways of teaching (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The findings from the phonetic tests pre- and post-intervention are closely correlated with the self-reported reflections in the questionnaire, and also flanked by the more extensive narrations in the semi-structured in-depth interviews. This strategy allows the students to appreciate the complex relationships between these dimensions.

A multidimensional approach like this can play a significant part in providing complete competency learning skills in enhancing university students in Thailand to pronounce English well.

Results from the study to answer the research questions

1. First Research Objective: Findings Report

The findings report of the first research objective: to reveal the problems and difficulties of English pronunciation processes studied by Thai EFL students was the Thai pronunciation problems observed by Huachiew Chalermprakiet University undergraduates.

The findings from Tables 1-4 show that Thai Undergraduates face difficulties in segmental and suprasegmental aspects of English pronunciation, particularly the consonant cluster, stress and intonation. However, the intervention was associated with improvements in mean scores and reduced standard deviations. This indicates that targeted training is successful to mitigate pronunciation problems and to improve Thai Undergraduates' spoken English performance in general. The results of Tables 1-4 are as follows:

Table 1

Segmental Phoneme Difficulties: Thai Undergraduates' Problems in Pronunciation Segmental Phonemes in English (Consonant and Vowel Sounds & Consonant Clusters)

No.	Statements	$\bar{X}$		S.D.	
		Before	After	Before	After
1	Consonant and Vowel Sounds	0.7127	0.9267	0.4527	0.2765
2	Consonant Clusters	0.6303	0.8773	0.4829	0.3283
	Total	0.6715	0.902	0.0214	0.0366

Thai students initially faced difficulties with segmental phonemes, especially in pronouncing vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters. Before the intervention, mean scores were 0.7127 for vowels and consonants, and lower at 0.6303 for consonant clusters, showing greater challenges in this area. High standard deviations (0.4527 for vowels/consonants and 0.4829 for clusters) indicated variability in performance.

After the intervention, mean scores improved to 0.9267 for vowels and 0.8773 for consonants, with reduced standard deviations (0.2765 and 0.3283), reflecting more consistent pronunciation. The intervention effectively enhanced students' ability to articulate segmental phonemes, particularly consonant clusters, which were initially the most challenging.

Table 2

Suprasegmental Phoneme Difficulties: Thai Undergraduates' Problems in English Pronunciation Suprasegmental Phonemes (Stress and Intonation)

No.	Statements	$\bar{X}$		S.D.	
		Before	After	Before	After
1	Stress	0.6722	0.8497	0.4676	0.3575
2	Intonation	0.6067	0.828	0.4887	0.3775
	Total	0.6475	0.8648	0.0149	0.0141

As shown in Table 2, Thai Undergraduates had some initial difficulty in English suprasegmental phonemes, particularly in stress and intonation with the low mean scores (stress: 0.6772, intonation: 0.6067) and high variability (SD for stress: 0.4676, intonation: 0.4887). After the training, mean scores improved significantly (stress: 0.8497, intonation: 0.828) and standard deviations decreased (stress: 0.3575, intonation 0.3775), indicating that learners became not only more proficient, but also more consistent. Overall, the intervention contributed to liberated learners'

pronunciation of suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation, which were previously difficult for Thai learners.

Table 3

The Interpretation of the Survey on the Problems in Pronunciation of English Stress among Thai Undergraduates

No.	Statements	$\bar{X}$		S.D.	
		Before	After	Before	After
1	Stressed at the 1st Syllable	0.6443	0.8271	0.1876	0.1373
2	Stressed at the 2nd Syllable	0.7927	0.92	0.1188	0.0567
3	Stressed at the 3rd Syllable	0.595	0.8133	0.0896	0.0585
	Total	0.6773	0.8535	0.0503	0.046

As shown in Table 3, with the 3rd syllable, Thai Undergraduates had initially considered "syllable stress" to be of the least difficulty; their difficulties also decreased after being taught especially for indifference to trouble with the 3rd syllable. "experimental variable" This shift implies an improvement in their confidence in and consistency of stress assignment.

Table 4

Interpretation of the Survey on Problems in Pronunciation of English Intonation among Thai Undergraduates

No.	Intonation	$\bar{X}$		S.D.	
		Before	After	Before	After
1	Simple Statements	0.695	0.93	0.0256	0.041
2	WH Questions	0.73	0.885	0.0616	0.0051
3	Commands	0.6695	0.917	0.0619	0.0262
4	Yes-No Question (Do/Be/Have)	0.486	0.768	0.0471	0.0685
5	Yes-No Question (Auxiliaries V.)	0.54	0.7225	0.0861	0.1029
6	Words in Series	0.71	0.855	0.0205	0.0256
7	Alternative	0.64	0.88	0	0
8	Addressing	0.64	0.87	0	0

As seen in Table 4 all the learners performed better in the pronunciation, specially in the WH question and short sentences. This reveals the effects of focused practice and speaks to the need for perseverative training to continue to develop their spoken English ability.

2. Second Research Objective: Findings Report

The second research objective is to investigate possible differences between English pronunciation proficiency prior to and after students were taught using traditional (face-to-face), e-learning, and blended instruction methods. The findings indicated that blended learning was the most effective teaching approach in the improvement of English pronunciation competence, followed by traditional learning and e-learning. The findings suggest that blended learning not only enhances pronunciation skills but also ensures consistent improvement across all students as can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Group A-B-C with 25 Students in Each Group (20 Marks Pre-test & Post-test)

No.	Group	$\bar{X}$		S.D.	
		Before	After	Before	After
1	Group A (Traditional Learning)	12.15	13.43	4.34	2.56
2	Group B (E-Learning)	12.17	12.49	3.47	2.37
3	Group C (Blended Learning)	11.8	13.88	3.47	2.84
	Total	12.04	13.27	3.78	2.6

All three groups in Table 5 showed improvements in the overall scores after the treatment, and the Blended Learning group made the largest gain. The total mean increased from 12.04 to 13.27, and the standard deviations decreased, indicating that performances became more homogenous. The intervention was overall successful, particularly for the Blended Learning group. Chi-square analysis was used to test the group differences of scores further.

Table 6

The Relationship among Groups of Students and Different Levels of Pre-test and Post-test (n= number of participants)

Group	Different level scores of pre-test and post-test			Total
	Increse	Be the same	Decrease	
Group A (Traditional Learning)	68	0	32	100
	n = 17	n = 0	n = 8	n = 25
Group B (E-Learning)	60	0	40	100
	n = 15	n = 0	n = 10	n = 25
Group C (Blended Learning)	100	0	0	100
	n =25	n = 0	n = 0	n = 25
Total	76	0	24	100
	n =57	n = 0	n = 18	n = 75
X2 - 12.28		df = 2		Sig = 0.002

A chi-square analysis revealed that instructional mode and improvement scores were significantly associated, and that none of the students in the Blended Learning group did not benefit. Blended Learning had the most positive effect on student achievement, with 76% showing positive gains.

3. Third Research Objective: Findings Report

The third research objective is to analyze students' satisfaction after the introduction of traditional (face-to-face), e-learning, and blended teaching method. The purpose of this study is to summarize student satisfaction from these methods and compare means and the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The purpose of the study was to assess the students' satisfaction with autonomous learning within various teaching settings: traditional (face-to-face) class, e-learning, and blended learning.

Data was obtained from questionnaires and interviews, focusing the following important facets:

1. Overall satisfaction with teaching method used in the course (traditional, e-learning, blended) which shows overall satisfaction with all types. 2) How effective the mode of teaching is in the development of the students' English pronunciation. 3) The degree to which the approach promotes student responsibility for their learning. 4) Fun and involvement of learning in a way. 5) Student preferences for the method, most notably related with finding the learning task more interesting and involving. 6) Emphasising lifelong learning and learner autonomy. 7) The student-centeredness of the teaching approaches, with the student at the heart of the learning process. 8) The inspiration from the method to learn to pronounce better than other ways. 9) Students' confidence in using existing technology or resources to practice pronunciation. Chances to be an active participant in the lesson an interact due to the method of teaching.

Extending the initial results, a nuance analysis shows particular satisfaction with the three learning environments. The present research evaluates the variations of satisfaction with the teaching methods according to groups of change against the corresponding ones of another ordinary student. It is worthy of note that the average scores of all items were differed between the two statuses, indicating the different level of satisfaction.

The teaching methodology has a great impact on the degree of active participation and interaction in classes. Results There were significant differences with three groups (e-learning, Blended Learning and traditional teaching) in a student satisfaction by Comparative analysis and ANOVA testing.

Consistent with the initial investigation, a closer look reveals different levels of satisfaction across the three educational environments. The paper investigates differences in student satisfaction with teaching methods employed. Differences in mean scores across the groups suggest differences in satisfaction.

Analysis of the data showed that mean scores and standard deviations (S.D.) on each item were not the same for the groups of students. The traditional learning methods (Group A) had a mean satisfaction score of 0.29 (SD = 0.47). Group B (E-Learning), the mean satisfaction score was 0.22 and the standard deviation 0.43. On the other hand, Group C (Blended Learning) obtained average mean satisfaction score of 0.49 with an attached standard deviation of 0.51.

The satisfaction scores are averages of the satisfaction level provided by students in each group. The highest mean satisfaction score (0.49) was obtained in Blended Learning (Group C), on average learners were more satisfied with this method than with Traditional Face-to-Face Learning or E-Learning only. Standard deviations are relatively similar across groups, though Blended Learning is the highest, at 0.51, which suggests that variability in students' responses is slightly higher in this group.

Comparing among these three methodologies, Blended Learning is considered as the most preferable option for the students as reflected by the reported average satisfaction score. It seems that a blend of face-to-face interaction and online learning resources may better accommodate students' needs or desires than one format alone.

4. Fourth Research Objective: Findings Report

The fourth research objective is to find out students' autonomy after instruction with the three teaching methods (traditional teaching, e-learning and blended teaching). The findings highlight how each method develops self-learning skills among students, as described in the reports below.

Table 7

Students' Level of Satisfaction with Autonomous Learning with the Teaching Methods (A, B, C)

Group of Students	n	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
1. The teaching methods effect on learner's study.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.28	0.46
B) E-Learning	25	0.20	0.41
C) Blended Learning	25	0.52	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.05
2. Learners have no limit to study and can study at any time and place.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.28	0.46
B) E-Learning	25	0.28	0.46
C) Blended Learning	25	0.44	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.03
3. Learners are convenient to review the lesson outside the classroom using their teaching media.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.28	0.46
B) E-Learning	25	0.24	0.44
C) Blended Learning	25	0.48	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.04
4. Using this teaching media allows learners to meet their learning objectives.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.28	0.46
B) E-Learning	25	0.24	0.44
C) Blended Learning	25	0.48	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.04

Table 7 *(Continued)*

Group of Students	*n*	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
5. Learners have the freedom to study from their teaching method.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.24	0.44
B) E-Learning	25	0.24	0.44
C) Blended Learning	25	0.52	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.04
6. Learners are convenient to review the lesson outside the classroom using their teaching media.			
A) Traditional Learning	25	0.28	0.46
B) E-Learning	25	0.24	0.44
C) Blended Learning	25	0.48	0.51
Total	75	0.33	0.04

The findings from Table 7 reported that the way learners perceived autonomous learning might be influenced by the methods used for teaching. The Blended Learning group (Group C) showed higher agreement about the perceived advantages of impact on their study habits, flexibility in studying anytime and anywhere, and ease in reviewing a lesson on their own (all mean scores were higher). Group B (e-Learning) showed the lowest level of perceived autonomy, and Group A (Traditional) was in between. On the whole, the students in the Blended Learning group held more positive autonomous learning behaviors compared with the other types of groups.

The researcher carried out a survey to measure students' satisfaction with self-regulated learning in different teaching methods (A, B, C). Questionnaires and interviews were employed to investigate the following issues: 1) Influence of the teaching methods on learners' study habits; 2) Nondistraction of the timetable for studying on when and where to study; 3) Convenience of learners in reviewing the material outside the classroom, with the help of the media; 4) Effective media which helped them in achieving improvement in their learning objectives; 5) The level of freedom that the learners enjoy in selecting their teaching methods.

Survey results represented that students' attitudes toward autonomous learning were affected by the type of instruction. Group C used Blended Learning, and participants in this group generally evaluated the Approach more positively, suggesting a higher level of study skills, increased learning opportunities anywhere and anytime, as well as more convenience in reviewing lessons by oneself, which were indicated by the above-average scores. By contrast, the least autonomy was perceived by Group A, which employed traditional teaching methods, and an intermediate level of autonomy was reported by Group B, who received distance-education. On the whole, students in Blended Learning environment showed to have achieved greater autonomous learning ability than those in e-learning or face-to-face learning situations.

Discussion

This research focused on effectiveness of traditional, e-learning, and blended learning on English pronunciation and learner autonomy of Thai Undergraduate students. The major findings indicated that pronunciation was improved with all the three learning methods; yet, blended learning yielded the most significant gains in both pronunciation accuracy and student-reported satisfaction and autonomy. Blended learning, specifically, as reported to have a greater influence on self-regulation and goal-setting skills when compared to traditional and e-learning methods.

These results suggest that the combination of face-to-face instruction with online resources yields a synergistic effect, catering to diverse learning preferences and fostering a variable learning experience. Combining the structure and personal interaction assumed by traditional classrooms, blended learning credited with being able to blend the flexibility and self-paced learning possibilities that e-learning can provide. That is in line with what Garrison and Vaughan (2008) suggested in relation to blended learning, where different modalities are strategically used to improve pronunciation.

The discussion of the findings reveals considerable pronunciation challenges for Thai undergraduates in mastering English pronunciation, due mainly to the problems descendants from basic phonetic units including consonants, vowels, and particularly consonant clusters, which play a minority role in Thai. Complexities are also found among the suprasegmentals of stress and intonation which in turn affect intelligibility. The influence of native Thai phonology often leads students to substitute English phonemes with familiar Thai sounds, like /s/ for /z/ and /w/ for /v/.

Students had more confidence and a clearer picture of their own self-efficacy through targeted interventions, yet this was not enough for them to pinpoint certain pronunciation weaknesses which suggests a higher necessity for phonetic awareness and native spoken model practice. Survey data show a positive effect of instruction on students' perception of their pronunciation skills, indicating that targeted instruction raises confidence as well as competence. However, persistent uncertainty about sound distinctions highlights the need for comprehensive teaching approaches that account for individual traits and emphasize phonetic training, native speech exposure, and both segmental and suprasegmental elements. Addressing these issues holistically is crucial, as traditional teaching methods and Thai phonological influences contribute to ongoing errors, calling for innovative and adaptive pedagogical approaches to improve English pronunciation skills.

While previous studies have highlighted the benefits of explicit pronunciation instruction (Muangpruan, 2011) and technology-enhanced learning (Chiu/Bao), this research extends these findings by demonstrating the comparative advantage of blended learning in the specific context of Thai undergraduates. Unlike traditional methods that often lack practice and feedback opportunities, and e-learning, which may lack individualized feedback (Drucker, 2003), this blended learning appears to strike a balance that supports both learning outcomes and student engagement.

The implications of these findings are significant for educators and institutions in Thailand and other similar EFL contexts. The study supports the adoption of blended learning models to enhance English pronunciation instruction, student satisfaction, and learner autonomy. By carefully designing blended learning environments that incorporate interactive exercises, metacognitive activities, and self-correction possibilities, educators can create more efficient and engaging learning experiences.

Nonetheless, several limitations have also been noted for this study. The sample size of 75 students, while adequate, may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused on a specific population of Thai undergraduates majoring in English or English-Chinese, and further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of blended learning across different learner populations and contexts. The study was conducted for a 15-week period, which may not have been sufficient to determine the long-term effect of the different teaching methods completely.

Recommendations
Instructional Recommendations

Educators should apply blended learning approaches to improve phonetic instruction and to increase student engagement and effectiveness (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Interactive exercises for pronunciation are necessary to promote self-practice. In the same vein, integrating metacognitive tasks is necessary to foster strategic learning (Dickinson, 1987) and to support the professional development of in-service language teachers in blended instruction methods.

Policy Suggestions for Institutions

Digital resources, including access to a dependable internet connection, a user-friendly Learning Management System (LMS), and audio recording devices for every learner, should be a priority for universities in order to provide effective pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, cross-disciplinary pronunciation labs can be created to monitor the long-term impact.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should investigate the optimal design and implementation of blended learning environments for pronunciation instruction, taking into account factors such as learner proficiency, available technology infrastructure and teacher awareness. Looking further, studying motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy in blended learning and the utilization of AI-generated feedback would be beneficial as well. Longitudinal studies are required to monitoring the long-term impact of blended learning on pronunciation accuracy and learner autonomy.

In conclusion, this study offers strong evidence for the effectiveness of blended learning in enhancing English pronunciation and fostering learner autonomy among Thai undergraduates. By embracing blended learning approaches, educators and institutions can empower learners to become more confident in using English for communications and thereby supporting their academic growth and enhancing future professional opportunities.

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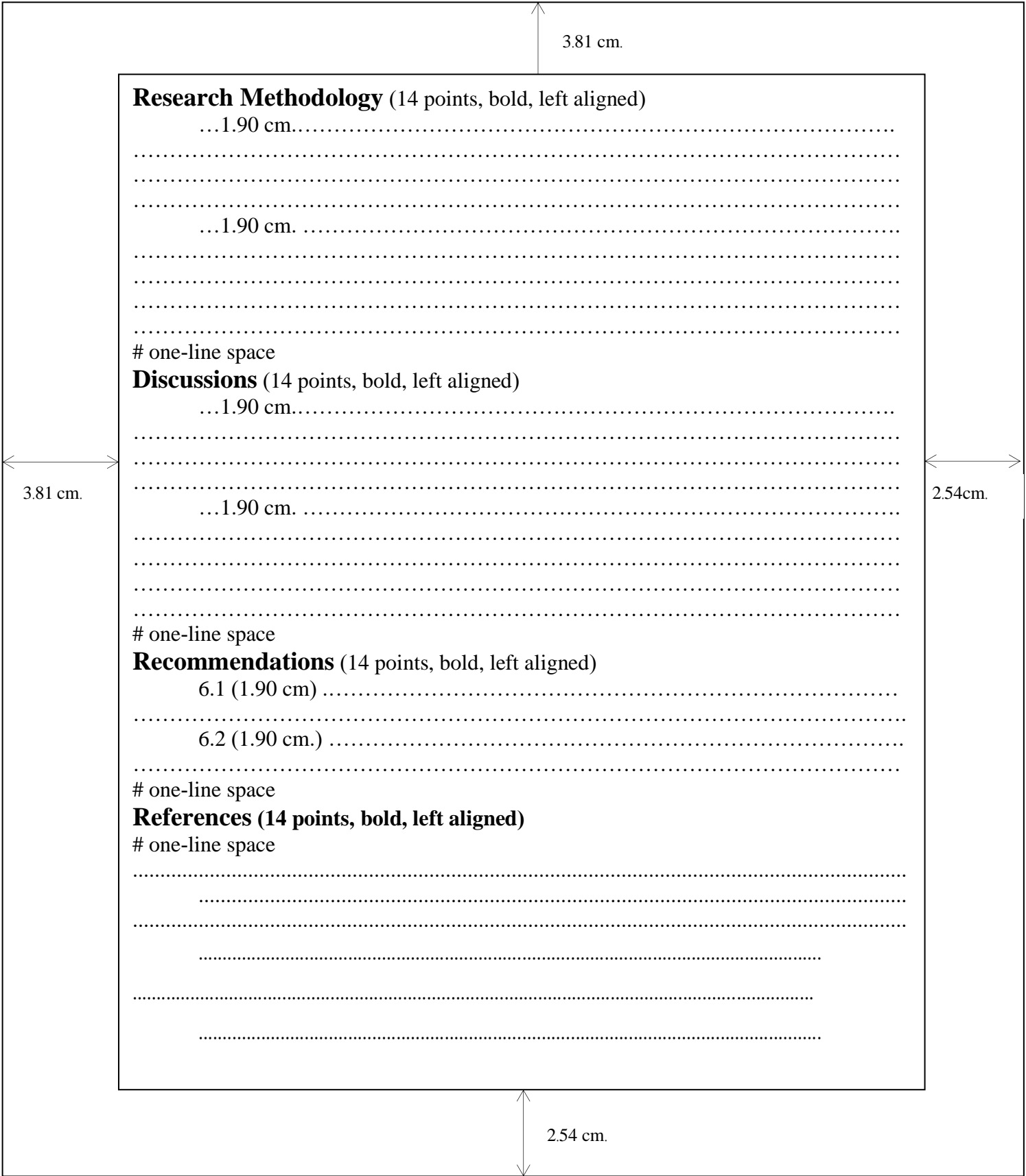
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