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AILA 60th Anniversary World Congress Proceedings

Guest Editors

**Vahid Nimehchisalem, Azirah Hashim, Shameem Rafik-Galea,
and Zarina Othman**



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Preface

The AILA 60th Anniversary World Congress was held at the KLCC Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur on August 11-16, 2024. This landmark event was hosted by the Malaysian Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL, <https://maal.org.my/>), an affiliate of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA, <https://aila.info/>). AILA has a large membership of more than 8000 members—researchers, practitioners, and policy makers active in the field of Applied Linguistics from different corners of the world. This, coupled with the organising committee’s hard work and Malaysian hospitality, resulted in a remarkably successful event.

Applied Linguistics is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of research and practice dealing with practical problems of language and communication. With the theme of ‘Linguistic Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Sustainability’, the AILA congress provided a top-notch stage for experts to share their research insights and be inspired by other presenters as they delved into the latest breakthrough trends in Applied Linguistics. The papers you are about to read in this proceedings showcase the studies presented at the AILA 60th Anniversary World Congress. The papers come from diverse research contexts and from different corners of the world in areas such as Cognitive Linguistics, Corpus and Data-Driven Linguistics, Critical Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes and Professional Communication (ESP/LSP), Educational Linguistics and Language Education, Intercultural Communication, Language Assessment and Testing, Multilingualism and Translanguaging Studies, Pragmatics and Discourse Studies, Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Sociolinguistics, and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (CALL/TELL/MALL). We expect that these papers will play a significant role in shaping the future of language studies.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to UPM Press and the team at Pertanika for making the publication of these papers a reality. We are also grateful to our sponsors, collaborators, presenters, and organising committee members for their hard and sincere work that made the congress a success. Finally, we appreciate our international team of reviewers, who patiently evaluated the manuscripts, often across several rounds, to ensure their high quality. The AILA 60th Anniversary World Congress proceedings bring together and showcase all these invaluable contributions.

Guest Editors

Vahid Nimehchisalem (Prof. Dr.)

Azirah Hashim (Prof. Dr.)

Shameem Rafik-Galea (Prof. Dr.)

Zarina Othman (Prof. Dr.)

Entrepreneurship in the Metaphors of Chinese University Students, Teachers, and Practitioners: An Elicited Metaphor Analysis

Yanchuan Geng^{1*}, Xiaoxue Zhu², and Kangyan Yin¹

¹School of Humanities and International Communication, Ningbo University of Technology, 315211 Ningbo, China

²College of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Wanli University, 315000 Ningbo, China

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the attitudes and perceptions towards “entrepreneurship” from stakeholders’ perspectives. Based on the questionnaires collected from 56 university students, 10 teachers, and 11 practitioners, the socio-demographic information suggest the importance of considering cultural and societal factors in students’ entrepreneurial endeavours, such as family economic status and parental education. Metaphor analysis highlights the perceptual differences in goal orientations (i.e., “either win or lose” for students, “specific goals to achieve” for teachers, “multiple and dynamic goals” for practitioners) and entrepreneurial considerations (e.g., “uncertainty” for students, “creativity” for teachers, and “virtues” for practitioners), suggesting the needs to bridge the gaps to facilitate entrepreneurial education in China.

Keywords: Cultural model, elicited metaphor analysis, entrepreneurship, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Innovation and entrepreneurship education, as outlined in No. 35 [2021] of the General Office of the State Council in China (State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2021), takes on increasing significance amidst a challenging job market. By 2024, an estimated 11.79 million university graduates will enter a labour market already burdened with 60 million unemployed individuals. Younger university graduates, therefore, have a more significant role in

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E-mail addresses:

Yanchuan Geng (gengyanchuan@outlook.com)

Xiaoxue Zhu (sophiazhuxx@outlook.com)

Kangyan Yin (yinkangyan@outlook.com)

* Corresponding author

launching startups and addressing market gaps, with their professional knowledge and potential. Such an endeavour is also expected by Chinese teachings on the Principles of Pursuing the Greater Good and Shared Interests. However, despite these favourable conditions, the reality is that only around 5% of university students choose to embark on entrepreneurial ventures each year, with a success rate hovering at 2-3%. This paper, therefore, focusses on the perceptions towards “entrepreneurship” among Chinese university students, teachers, and practitioners, with implications to inspire innovative approaches to entrepreneurship education in China.

RELATED LITERATURE

The diverse definitions and constructs of entrepreneurship highlight the complexity and multidimensional nature of this concept. Adeel et al. (2023) broadly define entrepreneurship as an individual’s ability to turn ideas into viable new ventures. This concept encapsulates various constructs such as entrepreneurial fear of failure (Cacciotti et al., 2020), entrepreneurial effort (Bowen & Clercq, 2008; Edelman, 2010), career calling (Palma et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2018), prior knowledge (Ozgen, 2003) and opportunity identification (Linan & Chen, 2009). In the context of Chinese university students, entrepreneurship has been found to be intertwined with factors such as economic, cultural and social capital, and career planning (Guo et al., 2024), showcasing the socio-cultural influences inherent to students’ entrepreneurial aspirations and behaviours. Given this, the present study aims to uncover a Chinese cultural model of entrepreneurship from the perspectives of key stakeholders: university students, teachers, and practitioners.

Metaphor analysis emerges as an effective tool to gain insights into complex and abstract psychological concepts such as attitudes, motivations, and culturally specific perceptions of teachers and students. Rooted in cognitive linguistics, this method draws on Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) argument that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p. 3). Compared to more conventional interviewing techniques, figurative language has been shown to offer greater vividness and concreteness (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1987). Another important advantage is that metaphor-producing activities appear to be a more creative task, which encourages more active participation from respondents. Notably, here, while participants in most cases can provide metaphors in the form of “A is B”, the reasoning behind such comparisons is crucial, and it is often more appropriate for participants themselves, rather than the researcher, to explain the underlying comparisons. In this regard, the Elicited Metaphor Analysis (EMA) developed by Jin and Cortazzi (2011) is particularly useful, as it employs a prompt “A is B, because ...” that requires participants to give their responses in a structured way with a “because” clause to indicate their reasons.

In the field of entrepreneurship studies, Lundmark et al. (2019), based on a corpus of 108 highly cited entrepreneurship articles, identified eight root metaphors for entrepreneurship—parenthood, mutagen, conduit of knowledge, method, mindset, networking, exploration, and politics. Alternatively, metaphors can be used to investigate participants' views. Dodd (2002), through analysing metaphors in entrepreneurial life stories, accounted for a grounded culture model of US entrepreneurship. Inspired by these metaphor studies, this study aims to understand the following questions by combining questionnaire and elicited metaphor analysis:

What are the levels of important dimensions of entrepreneurship among Chinese university students?

What are the perceptual differences towards “entrepreneurship” in the metaphors produced by Chinese university students, teachers, and practitioners?

METHODS

This pilot study collected socio-demographic and metaphor data from 56 university students majoring in Business English, 10 university teachers who have taught courses related to entrepreneurial education, and 11 practitioners who had experience starting up a business. The metaphor elicitation task uses the prompt:

Entrepreneurship is _____, because _____.

The socio-demographic data is analysed using Welch T-test and ANOVA in SPSS version 29, and the qualitative data is analysed thematically following the procedures suggested by Geng and Jin (2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the socio-demographic information indicates that the investigated university students appear slightly negative towards entrepreneurship and demonstrate higher levels of fear of failure. Families appear to exert a more significant impact on students, which aligns with the argument that key learning and experiential processes play a role in career choice, development, and adjustment (for a review of theories related to career development aspects, see Lent et al., 1994). Consistent with the findings of Guo et al. (2024), students from families with higher economic status are more likely to perceive entrepreneurship as a viable career option and may be more willing to invest the necessary effort to achieve success. A less frequently observed finding from this study is that participants

whose mothers have higher educational attainment tend to exhibit less fear of failure in entrepreneurship. This suggests the need for further research into how well-educated mothers can create a more supportive and encouraging environment for Chinese students pursuing entrepreneurial endeavours.

The metaphor data provides a rich and nuanced understanding of how different groups perceive and conceptualise entrepreneurship. Going beyond the traditional frequency list, Figure 1 presents a diagrammatic metaphor network of metaphor analysis of “entrepreneurship” after Jin and Cortazzi (2019). The various comparisons made to adventuring, involving something dangerous, animal and plant, caregiving, sports, and riding a rollercoaster highlight the lonely, uncertain, challenging, and dynamic nature of entrepreneurship. However, perceptual differences exist: Chinese students tend to see the outcome as either winning or losing and view entrepreneurship as something tempting or appealing; teachers see entrepreneurship as being associated with a set of specific goals that need to be adjusted over time and emphasise innovation as a crucial element of entrepreneurship; practitioners view entrepreneurship, partly aligns with the notion of “experimentation” proposed by Lundmark et al. (2019), as having diverse and dynamic goals subject to change over time and emphasise the entrepreneurial virtues such as determination, persistence, and adaptation.

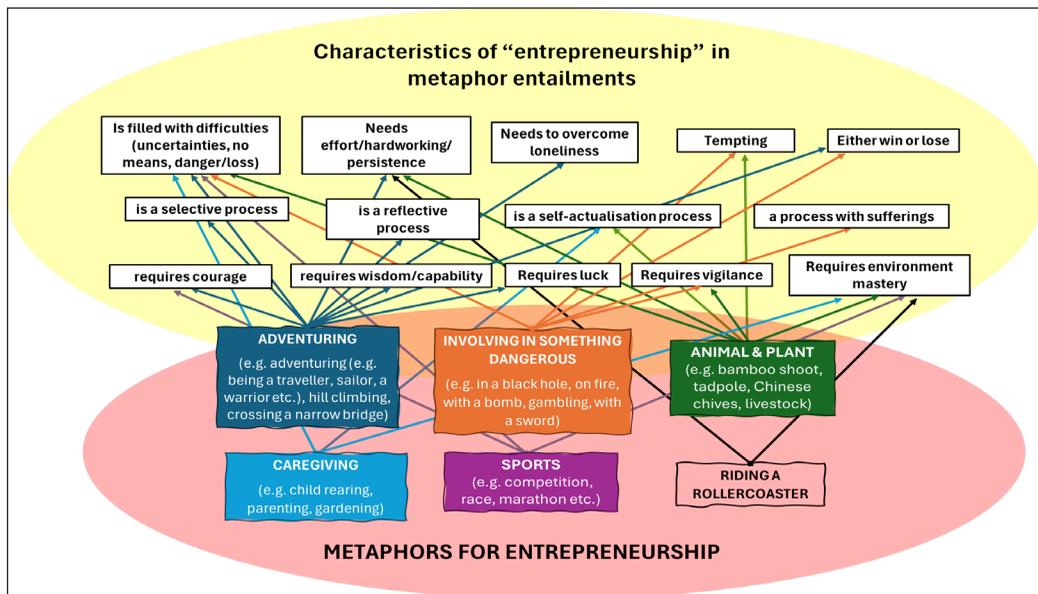


Figure 1. Characteristics of “entrepreneurship” from metaphors produced by university students, adapted from Jin & Cortazzi (2019)

The metaphor-producing activity employed in this study can also have pedagogical implications, which reaffirm a few important arguments made by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Firstly, metaphors can be a useful instrument for students to reflect on their understanding of entrepreneurship, encouraging them to articulate and refine their perceptions of the concept. Secondly, it offers teachers a tangible means of assessing students' knowledge of entrepreneurship, as the metaphors generated can reveal nuanced insights into their comprehension. Additionally, classroom sessions dedicated to sharing and discussing both popular metaphors and participants' own constructed metaphors are likely to encourage creativity and critical thinking, as students engage with diverse perspectives and challenge their own assumptions.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest the importance of considering social and cultural factors when studying the diverse and multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship in context. The perceptual differences that exist among university students, teachers, and practitioners may inspire educators and policymakers to devise targeted and tailored support for entrepreneurial education in China.

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Overt Expletives in Malay

Amir Rashad Mustaffa

Department of Malaysian Languages and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the presence of overt expletives (viz. pleonastic subjects) in the Malay language through a corpus analysis of newspaper articles archived by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2013). While previous research has explored the existence of null expletives in Malay via a theoretical approach, this study applies the theory and provides a focussed examination of constructions involving such expletives in actual language use in order to confirm the postulation of expletives in Malay. The methodology involves the identification of an overt non-referential nominal expression in the subject position of a small set of expletive constructions, e.g., raising, extraposition, and *tough*-constructions. It is found that, albeit scarce, overt expletives in the form of the 3rd person singular pronoun *ia* are used in the language, thus allowing us to confirm the presence of overt realisations of the null expletive postulated by scholars in theoretical studies of Malay. With concrete evidence of expletives in Malay, it is possible for linguists to model the language more accurately, not just allowing greater descriptive adequacy in theoretical syntax but also various applications in the field of linguistics, such as improved grammatical accuracy in machine translation and artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Expletives, extended projection principle, Malay, pleonastic subjects

INTRODUCTION

According to the Extended Projection Principle by Chomsky (1982), expletives such as *it* and *there* are non-referential pronouns that exist for the sole purpose of “the structural requirement that certain configurations... must have subjects” (p. 27). The subjects in the following examples carry no semantic content and do not refer to anything:

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E-mail address:

armus@um.edu.my (Amir Rashad Mustaffa)

- (1) a. * *It is raining.*
 b. * *There is no time to waste.*

Replacing them with a *wh*-phrase would render the corresponding questions ungrammatical; *wh*-phrases require an antecedent, whereas expletives cannot supply such an antecedent because they are semantically vacuous.

- (2) a. * *What is raining?*
 b. * *Where is no time to waste?*

Malay presents an interesting case as the subject position of constructions expected to be occupied by an expletive is consistently empty, as illustrated below:

- (3) a. ___ sedang hujan.
 prog rain
 ‘It is raining’
- b. ___ ti-ada masa untuk bazir.
 neg-exist time for waste
 ‘There is no time to waste.’

Comparing Malay to English, the following question holds: Is there any physical evidence of the existence of expletives in Malay?

- (4) a. **Apa yang benar-benar akan hujan?*
 What comp true-red pros rain
 (What will truly rain?)
- b. *{*Apa / dimana*} *terdapat lebih daripada satu kesan?*
 What at where exist more than one effect
 = (Where is more than one effect?)

RELATED LITERATURE

The literature on expletives in Malay is scarce. Although there are scholars who have postulated expletives such as Salleh (1995), Wahab and Nomoto (2017), and Selvanathan (2018), no substantiation or argumentation regarding their existence in Malay is provided.

Table 1
Overt expletives in the corpus

Construction	Example from Corpus
Tough	<i>Ia akan menjadi sukar untuk saya berjaya.</i> “It will become difficult for me to succeed.”
Extrapolation	<i>Ia adalah jelas bahawa polis mahu reka keterangan.</i> “It is clear that the police want to fabricate testimonies.”
Weather	<i>Ia benar-benar akan hujan.</i> “It truly will rain.”
Passive Reporting V	<i>Ia boleh dirumuskan bahawa terdapat petanda-petanda pemulihan ekonomi.</i> “It can be summarised that there are signs of economic recovery.”
Raising	<i>Ia mungkin kelihatan bahawa kita tidak mengikut ajaran Islam.</i> “It might seem that we are not following Islamic teachings.”
Existential	<i>Ia terdapat lebih daripada satu kesan.</i> “There is more than one effect.”

To address this issue, I argued in Mustaffa (2020) that certain constructions are occupied by a phonetically null variant of the expletive, Pro. These null expletives exist based on the adherence of Malay to the EPP, the movement of the subject from its base-generated position to SpecTP due to the EPP, and the definiteness restriction caused by expletive-argument chains. However, neither I nor other scholars have documented overt expletives in actual use in authentic language.

METHODS

Analysing a corpus of newspaper articles archived by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2013), this study has employed the following procedures:

1. Searching for relevant predicates in the corpus used in expletive constructions
2. Identifying instances of overt nominal expressions occupying the subject position in various syntactic constructions known to host expletives
3. Determining the referentiality of such constituents (if the constituent is non-referential, it can be concluded to be an expletive)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The usage of 3rd person *ia* provides support for the theoretical postulation of expletives in the language. The subject in the constructions in Table 1 is non-referential, as confirmed by the ungrammaticality of replacing it with a *wh*-phrase, as shown below in examples (4a-b):

- (5) a. **Apa yang benar-benar akan hujan?*
 What comp true-red pros rain
 (What will truly rain?)

- b. *{*Apa / dimana*} *terdapat lebih daripada satu kesan?*
What at where exist more than one effect
=
(Where is more than one effect?)

Ia is a weak pronoun that is barely ever used anymore, especially in spoken Malay, as suggested by its need for reinforcement by the 3rd person enclitic = *nya* in *ianya*. It used to replace human and non-human referents in previous stages of the language, but nowadays it can only be used with non-human referents. This has warranted its use as an expletive in Modern Malay.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have important implications for both the theoretical modelling of Malay syntax and practical applications in computational linguistics. The confirmation of overt expletives in Malay enhances the descriptive adequacy of syntactic theories and opens up possibilities for improving the accuracy of machine translation systems and artificial intelligence applications.

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Exploring a Lingua-techno Cultural Approach in the Global South: The Chilean Case

Tiare Gonzalez-Vidal

School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The University of Queensland, 4072 Brisbane, Australia

ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of fanfiction to integrate language, culture, and technology in Chilean EFL classrooms, addressing gaps in the national curriculum and limited professional development encompassing Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and culture teaching methodologies. The research has two aims: (1) to examine EFL teachers' practices and views merging language, culture, and technology and (2) to report on the effectiveness of fanfiction tasks merged with the linguaculture (LC) construct (Risager, 2016, 2020) as a vehicle for this integration. Using a qualitative, multi-method design, the study involved an online questionnaire (N = 128), a professional development workshop (N = 15), and a classroom, multiple case study implementation (N = 3). Questionnaire findings showed teachers valued cultural reflection and intercultural interaction but struggled to effectively incorporate it, particularly through technology. Informed by these findings, the workshop introduced fanfiction and LC, which teachers found effective for boosting language development, cultural awareness, and ICT skills. However, in the follow-up of the three case study teachers' implementation, challenges surfaced such as students' limited language proficiency, cultural background knowledge, and curricular constraints prioritising linguistic over intercultural competencies. These findings advocate for innovative pedagogical approaches aligned with global educational agendas, preparing students for global citizenship, and navigating future communication challenges in diverse, multilingual landscapes.

Keywords: EFL, fanfiction, ICT, linguaculture, technology

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E-mail address:

Tiare Gonzalez-Vidal (t.gonzalez@uq.edu.au)

INTRODUCTION

The integration of language, culture, and technology has gained increasing attention in foreign language (FL) education, particularly within Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). However,

the intersection of these domains remains underdeveloped in many educational contexts, especially in constrained- educational settings (Lee, 2011; Liaw, 2006). This study addresses that gap by investigating the pedagogical potential of fanfiction a form of creative writing based on existent narratives—as a tool to support a linguacultural and technology-enhanced (LCT) approach in Chilean English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

Despite advances in CALL and critical cultural pedagogy, existing research has focused on Global North contexts, with limited empirical attention to how linguaculture a theory of teaching emphasising the inseparability of language and culture in communicative acts (Agar, 1994; Risager, 2016, 2020) is integrated with digital practices in the Global South. The present study narrows this gap by exploring how critical linguacultural pedagogy (Risager, 2016, 2020), CALL practices and critical, reflective learning (Sauro & Chapelle, 2017; Slaouti & Motteram, 2006; Sykes, 2017) can be operationalised through fanfiction (Jamison, 2013) in Chile’s linguistic diverse but digitally unequal context.

Chile offers an ideal setting for this inquiry due to its increasingly multilingual makeup—Spanish, Indigenous languages like Mapudungun, and migrant languages such as Haitian Creole (National Institute of Statistics, 2022) and persistent educational inequalities, including uneven access to technology urban-rural digital divides (OECD, 2022; Valenzuela et al, 2014). Recent curricular reforms emphasise strategic Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) classroom integration and global communication drawing on the United Nations (UN) principles of equality, quality of education and global partnerships (Ministry of Education, 2022; United Nations, 2023), yet teachers still report limited curricular guidance translate these expectations to classroom practice (Gonzalez-Vidal & Moore, 2024). These constraints are particularly acute in rural, public schools throughout the country.

To bridge these gaps, this study proposes LC-based fanfiction tasks as a way to enhance students’ techno-linguacultural (TLC) competence—that is, the simultaneous development of linguistic, cultural, and digital literacies (Sauro & Chapelle, 2017). In linguaculture; culture—”the meaning side of language” (Risager, 2020, p.116)-embeds into three interrelated LC dimensions: *Semantic-pragmatic*-how language functions to convey meaning in context, *Poetic*-the role of language in creative expression, *Identity*-the construction and negotiation of identities through language use. Through fanfiction practices like crossovers, alternate universes, or character transformations, these LC dimensions could be tapped into as learners engage in pragmatic adaptation, creative language use (e.g, code-mixing), and identity exploration (e.g., gender and race representation) (Sykes, 2017).

Although empirical research shows that fanfiction fosters digital creativity, pragmatic language use, and cultural reflection (Curwood et al., 2013; Fukunaga, 2006; Leppänen, 2007) in diverse educational settings, no studies have examined CALL-based classroom applications of the LC framework. This limits our understanding of how such practices

might support equity-oriented, linguaculture-informed teaching in Global South contexts, particularly in under-resourced settings.

Specifically, this study explores,

- 1a. How do teachers view the integration of language, culture, and technology?
- 1b. What are their reported practices in incorporating culture and technology in their teaching?
- 2a. How do teachers perceive fanfiction's value post-workshop? And,
- 2b. How if at all, do their practices change during implementation?

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, multi-case study design grounded in a critical, participatory paradigm (Blaxter et al., 2010; Kemmis et al., 2014; Yin, 2003). Aligned with national curricular goals for digital literacy and intercultural learning (Ministry of Education, 2022), the research aims to explore teachers' views on LCT integration and pedagogical change following a professional development workshop (Kemmis et al., 2014). The study was conducted in three research phases.

- Phase 1: 128 in-service EFL teachers completed an online questionnaire.
- Phase 2: 15 teachers from the larger sample attended a two-module workshop on LC and fanfiction (1) theoretical foundations and (2) project plan design.
- Phase 3: A self-selected subset of teachers implemented LC-based fanfiction tasks in their classrooms over three months.

Based on the bigger sample, participants were mostly Spanish-speaking English teachers working in public and semi-private urban schools. Less than one-third reported indigenous affiliations (e.g., Mapuche) and most held a bachelor's degree in English-language teaching. Ethics approval was granted by the author's affiliated institution prior to data collection.

Data collection comprised 128 questionnaire responses, gathering quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' views and practices regarding the integration of language, culture, and technology (phase 1) which helped inform the content and approach of the workshop that followed, which was piloted with 3 non-participant, Chilean EFL teachers informing changes to instructional design before official delivery (Figure 1). The 36-item questionnaire covered five, 5-point Likert scales labelled as, (1) Language-culture integration, (2) Cultural familiarity, (3) Online activities, (4) ICT use in EFL, and (5) ICT usefulness (Byram & Risager, 1999; Oranje & Smith, 2018; Sercu et al., 2005; Wang & Coleman, 2009). Workshop data included project plans and reflective journal entries (phase 2), and classroom implementation data included revised project plans, journal entries, background surveys on teaching conditions, and email interviews with the case

study teachers. Datasets allowed for triangulation and an in-depth understanding of teachers' evolving views and practices before and after participating in the workshop.

Phase	Research Question	Dataset Source	Data size	Data Analysis		
Phase 1 Online questionnaire	Teachers' views and practices on integrating language, culture, and technology	Questionnaire responses	8 pages each	Descriptive frequency, mean, SD, percentages		
Phase 2 Workshop Phase		Usefulness of fanfiction tasks for integrating LCT	Lesson plans Reflective reports		25 pages (project plans) 4,635 words (reports)	Thematic analysis (NVivo)
Phase 3 Implementation phase		Changes in teachers' views and practices	Background survey Email interviews		3 entries (survey) 1,376 words (interviews)	

Figure 1. Overview of research phases, data sources and analytical procedures

Data were analysed in stages through a combination of descriptive statistics (SPSS) for Phase 1 and thematic coding (NVivo 12 plus) for Phase 2 and 3. Phase 1 utilised frequency counts, means, and standard deviations to analyse questionnaire responses. For Phases 2 and 3, thematic analysis of qualitative data identified emerging patterns in teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. A reliability analysis of questionnaire items showed satisfactory internal consistency reliability ($\alpha < .70$ for each scale) (Roever & Phakiti, 2018), and an intercoder reliability check for qualitative data was conducted with an agreement rate of 80% (Grabowski & Oh, 2018).

STUDY FINDINGS

The questionnaire revealed strong support for integrating language and culture in EFL education ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.35$, $N = 128$), with over 80% agreeing on its importance for students' intercultural communication skills. However, teachers reported moderate familiarity with cultural aspects, especially on topics like history and gender roles. For ICT use, teachers strongly agreed on its perceived usefulness ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.40$), but the actual use of ICT for culture teaching was moderate ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 0.61$). Teachers reported limited use of online activities ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 0.73$), especially interactive ones—such as telecollaboration (10% frequent use). The findings suggest a gap between teachers' supportive views on language-culture integration and their actual use of ICTs to promote it in the classroom.

Workshops' journal and interview data showed both perceived benefits and challenges associated with using fanfiction to integrate language, culture and technology in the classroom. Benefits included developing language creativity through reading and writing. Teachers noted that the approach enables students to “*create, think, and acquire new words*” (Sarah, Reflective Journal 2 or RJ2), and to develop “*knowledge of grammar aspects*” (Lilian; RQ2). It also expanded cultural awareness through the linguaculture framework (LC) by inviting students to “*think beyond the spectrum of action*” (Christian, RJ2) and to see English as “*another language that can enrich their own culture and language*” (Nadia; RJ2). In addition, teachers believed the approach reinforced ICT use and digital literacies, allowing students to “*generate different types of creative writing*” (e.g., incorporating images, as in picture stories) (Stephanie; RJ2) or connect with other fan authors online (Angelica; RJ2). Perceived challenges included student-related issues, such as limited English proficiency for creative writing; institutional constraints such as rigid curricula focused primarily on language development, and contextual barriers, including unequal access to technology—particularly in rural, public schools.

Regarding changes in teachers' views and practices, the workshop facilitated greater alignment between their beliefs about the importance of addressing both language and culture in EFL teaching and their actual use of technology to support this integration. Sarah, who initially valued identity analysis (Questionnaire item 4 or Q4), but used limited digital reflection tasks (Q18, RJ1), bridged this gap by designing a fanfiction project based on *The Secret Garden*, where students rewrote the story set in their local town prompting reflection on multiple identities and sense of affiliation. Christian, despite valuing controversial discussions (Q5), rarely promoted online collaboration (Q20) in the classroom; later, he recognised the potential of Fanfiction websites to enrich his teaching procedures. Christian planned a project in which students rewrote the ending of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, linking it to Chile's 2019 social unrest and highlighting underlying socio-political inequalities. Stephanie acknowledged the importance of intercultural communication (Q7) but had limited online classroom engagement (Q19); addressed this by using storyboard.com for a fanfiction project where students co-created picture stories that retold Mapuche folktales and colonial histories, connecting local heritage with global audiences (RJ1).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study builds on prior work in critical linguacultural pedagogy (Risager, 2016) by exploring how Chilean EFL teachers perceive and implement the integration of language, culture, and technology, with a focus on fanfiction (Jamison, 2013) as a pedagogical tool. In terms of teacher views and practices before engaging in the workshop, the study confirms prior findings on limited ICT use for intercultural learning (Lee, 2011; Liaw, 2006) and extends them by highlighting Chilean EFL teachers' surface-level cultural focus (Byram

& Risager, 1999) and training gaps (Figueredo-Canosa et al., 2020), compounded by infrastructure and socioeconomic disparities (OECD, 2022).

Consistent with earlier research (Brutt-Griffler & Kim, 2018; Cornillie et al., 2021; Fukunaga, 2006; Leppänen, 2007) teachers valued the use of fanfiction introduced in the workshop for fostering identity exploration and engaging with global relevant, controversial issues. This study extends prior work by identifying the affordances of LC-based fanfiction to promote creativity, language development and cultural awareness in a single, integrated task (Curwood et al., 2013; Sauro & Sundmark, 2016). Teachers reported that these tasks aligned with the LC framework as beneficial to promote reflection on identities and local realities, fostering deeper engagement with languages and cultures in the classroom (Risager, 2016; 2020). Furthermore, the study shows a shift from a surface-level treatment to culture through technology use in the classroom, to a more critical, LC-integrated practice, despite persistent barriers such as limited access to technology, infrastructure, and curriculum flexibility (Gonzalez & Moore, 2024; Lee, 2011; Liaw, 2006). Study limitations include reliance on self-reported data, the absence of student perspectives and a relatively short (three-month) follow-up period on teacher implementation. Future studies should consider including classroom observations, a broader range of stakeholders, and a longitudinal design to capture sustained pedagogical change. Ultimately, the study affirms that integrating LC and technology—especially through creative practices such as fanfiction—repositions language education as both a critical and transformative practice. In alignment with global educational agendas, this approach equips learners for global citizenship and prepares them to navigate the increasingly complex lingua-technocultural landscapes of the Global South and beyond.

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Enhancing High School Students' Academic Writing

Banani Roy Chowdhury

School of Education, GlobalNXT University, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

For high school students in the Middle East, academic writing plays an increasingly important role, particularly for those planning to pursue higher education in English-medium universities where assessments such as IELTS and TOEFL reflect international academic expectations. Against this background, the present qualitative study examined students' use of cohesive devices and explored the challenges they face in producing clear and coherent academic writing. The study consisted of ten high school students who participated in a pilot project and completed a researcher-designed diagnostic writing task under real-time classroom conditions. Observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were used to compile data, allowing a comprehensive study of students' writing practices, experiences, and obstacles. Manual analysis of the writings revealed common cohesion (e.g., references, substitutions, conjunctions, and collocations) and coherence (e.g., logical organisation and usage of linkers) flaws. Results exposed regular problems with grammatical and lexical coherence as well as inadequate arrangement to present concepts. In order to raise students' awareness of coherent and logical writing styles, boosting their academic and professional success, teachers have to focus on targeted instruction and feedback strategies.

Keywords: Academic writing, assessment, cohesion, coherence, proficiency

INTRODUCTION

English is considered the most common language of international communication and plays a vital role in professional development and academic achievement. In Middle Eastern countries especially in the UAE. Where English has become the primary language of instruction, mastering academic writing is essential for high school students, particularly those planning to pursue higher education in the West.

Students are required to demonstrate their writing in a way that meets international standards, as required by exams like IELTS

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E-mail address:

Banani Roy Chowdhury (bcbanani@gmail.com)

and TOEFL, in order to enhance their overall language development. However, many students need help generating and organising ideas logically in their essays.

Researchers like Fareed et al. (2016) have highlighted the importance of writing in enhancing language performance. They also referred that developing students' discourse and pragmatic abilities often needs to be noticed.

Addressing these challenges requires a focused approach to teaching the importance of cohesion and coherence in academic writing. It also involves in providing targeted feedback to learners to help them improve their academic writing skills.

RELATED LITERATURE

Zohrabi and Khalili (2023) argue that different forms of written corrective feedback (WCF) can play an important role in improving students' academic writing. Their study shows that explicit feedback strategies such as direct correction, metalinguistic explanation, electronic feedback, and reformulation are particularly effective in supporting ESP learners' writing development in both the short and long term. These forms of feedback help students notice and correct ungrammatical language, which in turn supports the internalisation of appropriate linguistic forms and a clearer understanding of academic conventions. Zohrabi and Khalili (2023) also point out that when students receive feedback from more than one source, such as teachers, model texts drawn from corpora, and their peers, they tend to engage more actively with their writing and take greater responsibility for revising it. They therefore argue that using a mix of feedback strategies, adjusted to students' needs, is likely to support meaningful improvement in academic writing.

Research also shows that high school students hoping for higher education in English-speaking nations (Brown & Bailey, 1984, as cited in Dobakhti et al., 2023) must first develop logical and convincing writing skills. Producing clear and logical academic papers depends much on mastery of cohesive devices such as references, substitutions, conjunctions, and collocations (Goodson, 2012, as cited in Dobakhti et al., 2023). Many students, however, struggle with grammar and lexical coherence as well as with arranging their ideas successfully (Dobakhti et al., 2023). Along with helpful criticism, targeted instruction in these areas has been shown to raise students' confidence and writing ability (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016, as cited in Dobakhti et al., 2023). For students getting ready for tests like IELTS and TOEFL, which measure their capacity to generate cohesive academic writing under test conditions, such approaches are very important. Therefore, improving students' academic writing skills and future performance depends on explicit instruction of coherence and consistency.

According to researcher Lismay (2020), cohesion and coherence are crucial in academic essays. He also emphasised that these two aspects (cohesion and coherence) are important in producing clear and practical work. Cohesion calculatively uses vocabulary

and grammatical structures to connect ideas, and coherence strategically involves the arrangement of sentences and paragraphs to convey meaning and logical progress of ideas (Crossley & McNamara, 2010).

According to Suwandi (2016) no matter how vital cohesion and coherence are, students need to get familiar with the concepts, to understand and then apply it in their writing. The reasons behind this are a need for more motivation, limited lecture duration, and inadequate prior knowledge of English (Lismay, 2020). Furthermore, interference from students' native language, such as Arabic, can also confuse their writing ability cohesively and coherently, as mentioned by Mourtaga (2004) and Ahmed (2010) in their research.

To address these issues, teachers should guide students to improve their understanding and application of these concepts. As Lismay (2020) mentioned teaching cohesive devices, sentence structure, and organisation can significantly enhance students' writing skills.

Rahman and Latief (2021) further reinstated that cohesion helps to link sentences and phrases in order to create a coherent text. This can happen only through grammatical and lexical ties, contributing to the text's overall meaning and interpretation (Bahaziq, 2016). Simultaneously, coherence involves in arranging ideas in a logical way, which is effective in academic communication (Crossley & McNamara, 2010; Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Yang S (2022), writing is a concrete expression and a vital output skill in English language. It is essential for high school students to master this skill, especially if they are thinking of pursuing higher education or gaining professional success. Good academic writing employs cohesive devices and creates coherent paragraphs. Hence the research questions for my project are as follows:

1. How proficient are students in using cohesive devices in academic writing to express thoughts and ideas and produce coherent paragraphs?
2. What grammatical and lexical elements and linking strategies are used to enhance cohesion and coherence in academic writing?

METHODS

A pilot study was executed to test whether the research procedures would work as planned. The method used was largely qualitative and partly quantitative. The qualitative method helps researchers to interpret and describe data (Amperawaty & Warsono, 2019). Whereas tools such as written texts and survey responses were used to support the analysis and also to gain a detailed understanding of students' academic writing, and the challenges they face in maintaining cohesion and coherence.

The pilot study had ten students who wrote their essays in a 'real time writing condition.' The researcher identified their weaknesses to find solutions. Each essay was manually corrected, and errors were listed to determine the pattern and frequency.

This study analysed high school students' writing samples, focusing on the grammatical and lexical elements that enhance cohesion in essays. There was firsthand data gathered where students were observed as they engaged in real-time writing activities, collaborated with peers, and worked on tasks. The observational method served as a tool for studying student behaviour and interaction in class.

Surveys were used to collect data through questionnaires with open-ended questions about students' writing experiences and the frequency of cohesion and coherence errors. Interviews provided authentic insights by capturing direct participant quotations regarding the study's objectives.

The combination of essays, surveys, and interviews helped assess students' weaknesses in understanding and applying coherence and cohesion in academic writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the method, it was found that the highest number of errors were related to references, substitutions, conjunctions, and collocations as cohesive devices. Under coherence, appropriate content words and linkers were lacking.

RESULTS

Combining data from observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with the students' diagnostic essays indicated some repeating trends in using cohesive devices and coherence in academic writing.

1. **Use of Cohesive Devices:** A manual study of the essays revealed that although students tried to apply coherent devices, their application was usually inconsistent. Figure 1 presents a sample student essay with coded instances of cohesive devices and coherence issues, illustrating the patterns identified in the manual analysis.
 - Common mistakes were references, especially with pronouns like 'this' and 'it,' often used ambiguously without clear antecedents.
 - Most students depended mainly on repetition rather than more sophisticated cohesive methods; the students hardly used substitution and ellipsis.
 - Academic connectors (e.g., 'nevertheless,' 'moreover') were misused. Conjunctions like 'and,' 'but,' and 'because' were overused.
 - Lexical cohesiveness through collocations was poor; students frequently battled word choice, resulting in awkward or imprecise language.\

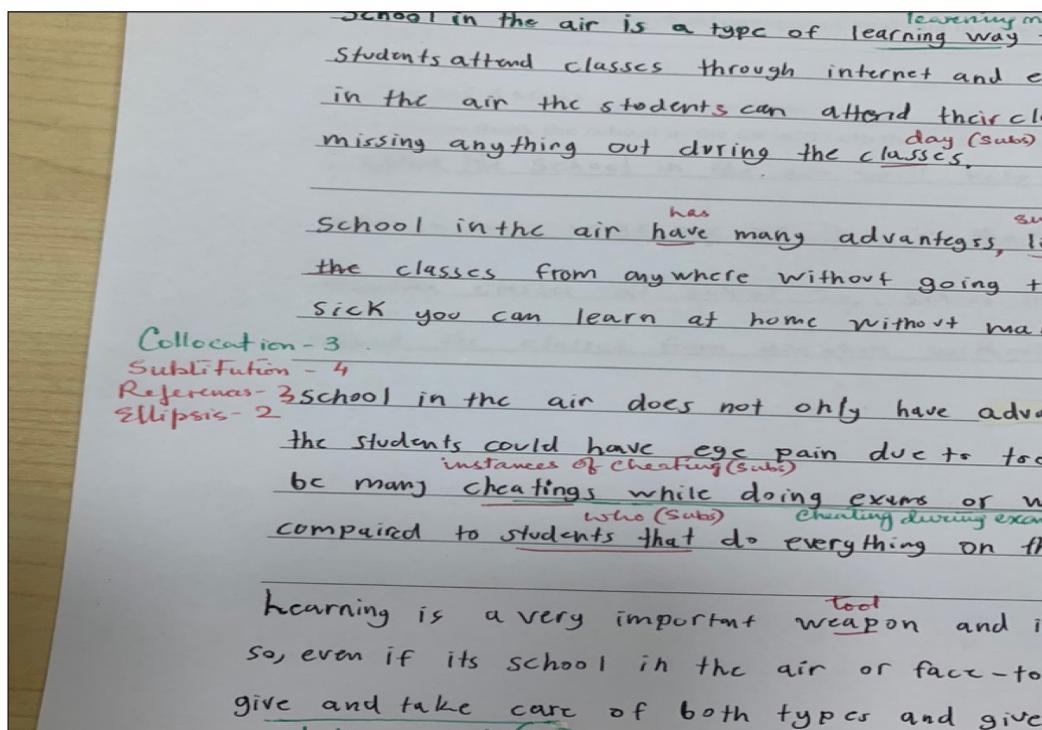


Figure 1. Sample essay of a student

2. Coherence and Organisation: Most of the pieces revealed clear problems with general coherence and logical organisation:
 - Many times, ideas were presented in a jumbled way with poor topic sentences and inadequate paragraph development.
 - Some students included several unconnected concepts inside a single paragraph, making it difficult for readers to follow their arguments.
 - Some students either omitted logical development or relied just on fundamental conjunctions.
3. Students' consistent grammatical and lexical errors caused by which further damaged coherence and coherence:
 - Out of ten essays, eight had regular grammatical mistakes, especially in verb tense and subject-verb agreement.
 - Limited academic vocabulary caused pupils to develop their arguments using more general phrases instead of more exact language. They repeated simple words.
4. Learnings from questionnaires and interviews' answers from the tests and interviews provide further understanding of students' viewpoints and experiences.

Figure 2 illustrates a sample of students’ survey responses, highlighting their perceptions of writing difficulties, particularly in relation to the use of linking words and logical organisation:

- Many students admitted to “thinking in Arabic first” and then straight translating into English, which added strange language and logical gaps.
- Many admitted they lacked formal education in paragraph construction and logical linkage; therefore, they were unsure how to connect concepts.
- Seven out of ten students said that their main trouble with their writing is using ‘appropriate linking words.’

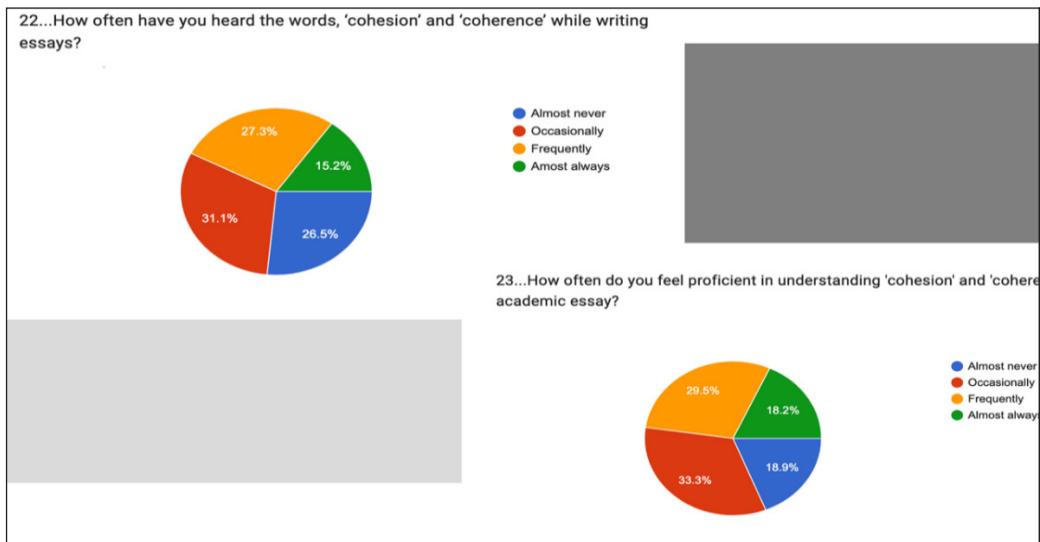


Figure 2. Sample survey by students

Table 1 summarises the frequency of cohesion- and coherence-related errors identified across the ten student essays, indicating that grammatical errors, paragraph-level organisation issues, and misuse of cohesive devices were consistently observed.

Table 1
Common errors committed by students

Error Type	Description	Examples from Students’ Essays	Frequency
Pronoun Reference	Using ambiguous pronouns like, ‘this,’ ‘it’ without distinct antecedents.	‘The government needs to support education, because this is good and it helps somehow.’	6 out of 10 essays
Conjunctions	Little variance in the overuse of basic conjunctions like ‘and,’ ‘but,’ and ‘because,’...	‘I went to the store and I bought food and I met my friend.’	7 out of 10 essays

Table 1 (continued)

Error Type	Description	Examples from Students' Essays	Frequency
Linkers	Incorrect usage of linkers.	'The results were poor. However, it was good.' (incorrect placement)	5 out of 10 essays
Grammatical errors	Irregularities in subject-verb agreement and verb tenses.	'She don't likes the idea.'	8 out of 10 essays
Paragraph structure	Paragraphs lack well-defined topic sentences, poor organisation of thoughts.	'The book was interesting. It had many characters. The plot was good. Reading is fun.'	9 out of 10 essays

DISCUSSION

Authors like Gunas et al. (2020) claim that students' writing assignments in descriptive and narrative text genres show elements of coherence and cohesiveness that are lacking in others. Three hundred ninety pupils from thirteen senior high schools were instructed to create both narrative and descriptive texts on recognised subjects. The data were examined using a descriptive quantitative model of percentages and counted scores. According to the study, the pupils' writing lacked good application of coherence and cohesiveness elements. While most of the texts were completely disorganised and unintelligible, just a tiny portion were slightly cohesive and coherent. The lower-level classification of the elements of cohesion and coherence identified in the students' writings was relatively weak.

This study offers an understanding of the difficulties high school students experience in applying cohesive strategies and attaining coherence in their writing. By comparing the results with this study, it highlights whether such problems arise among Middle Eastern students and guide focused teaching plans.

Conversely, Feliks et al. (2024) found that their study looked at the association between the usage of coherent devices and the quality of student writing. Examining 100 thesis abstracts from undergraduate linguistics majors, the researchers conducted Pearson's correlation analysis to ascertain the degree of the association between the frequency of coherent devices used and the writing quality ratings awarded by professional raters. Higher writing quality ratings were shown to be significantly and positively correlated with the employment of varied and appropriate coherent devices, especially references and substitutes. The study underlines the need to teach students the appropriate use of cohesive devices to improve the clarity and coherence of their academic writing (Feliks et al., 2024). Though their study mostly addresses university students, its results on the benefits of consistent gadget use on writing quality can be compared with the existing observations at the high school level. This research will ascertain whether early interventions teaching coherent devices might produce better writing results in higher education.

The following points have been identified while comparing and contrasting the two articles with the existing study.

Participant Statistics

The existing research focused on Middle Eastern high school students preparing for standardised tests like TOEFL and IELTS. The article by Gunas et al. (2020) examined the descriptive and narrative genres of writing performance of senior high school pupils. At the same time, the article by Feliks et al. (2024) examined thesis abstracts from undergraduate linguistics majors.

Research Concentration

Regarding research concentration, the existing study evaluated academic writing students' coherence and command of cohesive devices. In the first research mentioned above by Gunas et al. (2020), the authors examined students' descriptive and narrative papers for elements of cohesion and coherence. On the other hand, the second article by Feliks et al. (2024) investigated how the general quality of academic writing correlated with the usage of coherent devices.

Methodology

The present research used qualitative techniques like questionnaires, observations, diagnostic essays, and interviews. Gunas et al. (2020) used a descriptive quantitative model to examine scores and percentages. Feliks et al. (2024) examined writing samples quantitatively, applying Pearson's correlation.

Findings

The results showed that many students struggled with cohesion and coherence, particularly in organising ideas and maintaining grammatical and lexical accuracy. Essays with limited coherence were frequently rated at lower proficiency levels, whereas texts that employed cohesive devices more effectively tended to receive higher writing quality scores.

CONCLUSION

The implications were as follows: The Key Performance Indicators should have more reference to cohesion and coherence. Teachers have to refer to cohesion and coherence in every writing class so that the students get familiar with the terminologies. There should be specific writing classes allotted referring to cohesion and coherence on a regular basis. Finally, students should be cautious about translating ideas from Arabic to English

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On the Pragmatics of Humour in Language Teaching

Dennis Tark

Department of German Language and Literature, Institute of Primary Education, University of Rostock, Kröpeliner Str. 57, 18055 Rostock, Germany

ABSTRACT

While humour is recognised as an influential resource in language teaching, systematic discourse-based research on how humorous actions shape interactional dynamics in multilingual classrooms—and how teachers respond to humour in students' heritage languages—remains limited. This study addresses this gap through a qualitative corpus-pragmatic analysis of thirty-three ApeK corpus transcripts from German L2 classrooms. In addition, ten supplementary interviews with students and teachers were analysed to contextualise and enrich the corpus findings. Using Goffman's frame analysis and conversation analysis, humorous actions were identified through iterative coding that triangulated semantic incongruity, laughter annotations, sequential positioning, and contextual transcript notes. The analysis shows that irony, playful teasing, and sarcasm were the most frequent humour types observed. Humorous actions often functioned as frame disruptions that prompted teacher reframing efforts such as rule impositions or prohibitions. Humour in students' heritage languages was disproportionately likely to elicit corrective responses, although the data provide no evidence that such humour was intentionally disruptive. Teachers' reactions were frequently influenced by comprehension gaps or stereotype-based insecurity rather than student intent. The study operationalises humour competence as the ability to recognise frame disruptions, interpret interlocutor intent, and respond constructively across L1 and L2 contexts. Limitations include the absence of audio/ video data and the qualitative scope of the sample. The inclusion of the ten interviews enhances triangulation but remains limited in number, highlighting the exploratory nature of the findings. Future research should incorporate multimodal corpora and evaluate training interventions to foster humour competence. By clarifying interactional patterns,

teacher responses, and institutional implications, this study enhances empirical understanding of humour's role in multilingual German L2 education and informs teacher development for more inclusive practice.

Keywords: Frame analysis, humour, language teaching, multilingual classrooms, pragmatics

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E-mail address:

Dennis Tark (dennis.tark@uni-rostock.de)

INTRODUCTION

Humour constitutes a multifaceted communicative resource capable of shaping classroom dynamics, particularly in language learning contexts, as it engages both linguistic and socio-pragmatic competencies. Although the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) does not provide an extensive discussion of humour, it explicitly mentions humour in chapters 4 and 5 in connection with socio-pragmatic competences. This indicates that humorous communication is recognised as a facet of pragmatic skill, suggesting its potential to engage students, reduce anxiety, and foster a supportive learning environment.

Despite these potential benefits, the deployment of humour in language teaching presents notable challenges. Humour is inherently subjective, with its interpretation heavily influenced by cultural and individual factors. In multilingual classrooms, where students and teachers come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the potential for humour to be misunderstood or to cause unintended disruptions is particularly high.

Moreover, empirical research on humour in language classrooms remains limited, especially in multilingual contexts. Existing studies have rarely examined how cultural and linguistic diversity influences students' reception of humour, leaving a critical gap in our understanding of its pragmatic use and its impact on classroom interactions in L2 settings.

This study investigates the pragmatic dimensions of humour in the context of teaching German as a Second Language (L2). It seeks to understand how humour is utilised within the classroom, how it affects interactions between teachers and students, and what challenges it presents in a multilingual educational environment. By focusing on the use of humour in language teaching, this research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how linguistic and cultural diversity shapes classroom interactions and how teachers can effectively manage these dynamics to support learning.

RELATED LITERATURE

The role of humour in communication has been a subject of interest across various disciplines, including linguistics, sociology, and education. According to Kotthoff (1998), humour serves as a critical tool for social interaction, helping to establish rapport, diffuse tension, and convey complex ideas in an accessible manner. In the context of language teaching, humour has been identified as a valuable resource for engaging students, facilitating comprehension, and creating a positive classroom environment (Belyaev, 2022). However, perspectives differ: while Belyaev highlights its benefits, Thielemann (2008) cautions that humour can be problematic when cultural interpretations diverge. This contrast underscores the need to examine under which conditions humour supports learning and when it may cause disruption, particularly in multilingual classrooms.

The multimodal nature of humour, which often involves verbal, non-verbal, and contextual cues, adds to its complexity, making it both a powerful and potentially

problematic tool in the classroom (Mondada & Schmitt, 2010). Recent literature further emphasises that humour functions differently depending on socio-cultural and linguistic contexts, suggesting that monolingual-focused studies may overlook challenges specific to multilingual classrooms (Attardo, 2020; Bell, 2009; Dynel, 2009; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2014).

Humour's interpretation is highly context-dependent, influenced by cultural norms, individual experiences, and the specific social dynamics of the classroom (Belyaev, 2022). In multilingual classrooms, students' and teachers' cultural backgrounds may differ considerably, affecting what is perceived as humorous (Dynel, 2009; Thielemann, 2008). Goffman's (1971, 2008) concept of frame analysis provides a framework to understand these dynamics: by examining how participants "frame" classroom situations, researchers can see why humour that aligns with one participant's expectations may disrupt another's, especially in culturally diverse settings.

Previous studies have highlighted the dual role of humour in educational settings: it can enhance engagement and learning but also has the potential to create disruptions, particularly when there is a mismatch between the teacher's and students' perceptions of what is humorous (Kotthoff, 1998; Thielemann, 2008). However, existing research rarely examines humour in multilingual classrooms from a pragmatic or corpus-analytic perspective, nor does it sufficiently explore how teachers manage humorous interactions in practice. This identifies a clear research gap: while general benefits and risks of humour are known, the interactional management of humour in multilingual L2 classrooms remains underexplored.

This study builds on these insights by applying a pragmatic and corpus-analytic approach to investigate humour in the context of German L2 instruction, with a particular focus on how humorous interactions are managed in multilingual classrooms.

METHODS

This study employs a corpus-pragmatic approach, utilising Goffman's frame analysis directly (Goffman, 1971, 2008) as the theoretical framework, with Tark (2024) providing guidance on the practical implementation of frame-analytic coding and his concept of image to analyse the role of humour in classroom interactions. The ApaeK corpus, which consists of transcripts from German L2 classrooms, serves as the primary data source. The corpus includes several dozen transcripts, which were randomly selected from different grade levels and years of data collection within the corpus to ensure transparency and a varied representation of classroom interactions. Examples were also gathered from interviews conducted with students learning German as a second language, who shared their experiences. These interviews were collected independently from the corpus and were analysed systematically alongside the corpus data to contextualise findings. Furthermore,

additional data was obtained through field research in primary schools, collected via observations and narrative interviews with teachers. Field observations were conducted over multiple classroom sessions and recorded via field notes, while interviews were semi-structured and conducted in German. All qualitative data were systematically analysed rather than serving merely as illustrative anecdotes. The analysis focuses on identifying instances of humour, examining how these interactions influence the verbal actions of participants, and assessing the extent to which they align with or disrupt the instructional framework. Frame disruptions in the transcripts were identified following the procedure outlined by Tark (2024), coding for moments where humorous actions or remarks did not align with the prevailing instructional frame. All humour instances were coded individually by the author, evaluating verbal, non-verbal, and multimodal cues to determine whether the intended humorous meaning was recognised, negotiated, or misinterpreted.

The study pays particular attention to situations where students use their native languages to express humour. In multilingual classrooms, the use of non-German languages for humorous purposes can present unique challenges, potentially leading to frame disruptions. These disruptions occur when the intended meaning of a humorous action is not recognised or accepted by others in the classroom, leading to misunderstandings or conflicts. By analysing these instances, the study seeks to understand how teachers navigate the complexities of humour in a multilingual setting and what strategies they employ to maintain a positive and inclusive classroom environment. Ethical procedures were followed: consent obtained from participants, confidentiality maintained, and data anonymised.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the ApaeK corpus reveals that humour plays a complex role in German L2 classrooms, serving as both a pedagogical tool and a source of potential disruption. In many instances, humour was found to enhance classroom interactions, helping to create a more relaxed and engaging learning environment. For example, teachers often used humour to introduce new concepts, explain difficult points, or manage classroom behaviour. When humour was successfully integrated into the lesson, it appeared to facilitate learning by making the material more accessible and enjoyable for students. Across the 33 transcripts examined from the ApaeK corpus, humorous actions occurred on average 2–4 times per 45-minute lesson. These actions were always contextualised and framed, yet the frames were not necessarily identical to the instructional frame. Humour was triggered both by external factors (e.g., teacher interventions, ongoing lesson events) and internal group dynamics among students, independent of the teacher. The analysis shows that irony, playful teasing, and sarcasm were the most frequent humour types observed. Irony and sarcasm appeared almost exclusively in teachers' utterances, while irony and playful teasing were common among students' humorous actions.

However, the use of humour in multilingual classrooms also posed significant challenges. The analysis identified several instances where humorous actions led to frame disruptions, particularly when students used their native languages. In these cases, teachers often struggled to interpret the humour, sometimes perceiving it as a challenge to their authority or as a disruption to the flow of the lesson. Frame disruptions were identified when humorous utterances caused shifts in participation structure or required explicit negotiation of meaning. In several cases, students' humour in languages other than German led to moments of confusion or repair sequences, as described by Tark (2024) in relation to temporary shifts in interactional frames. Laughter was frequently observed as a response to such frame disruptions, especially when they resulted from verbal aggression or teasing among students.

Teachers and interview participants often perceived these events differently: while laughter occurred naturally in the classroom, some teachers interpreted it as a sign of verbal aggression when students used their L1. This discrepancy highlights the difference between perceived and actual manifestations of humour in the multilingual classroom. These disruptions were particularly pronounced in situations where there was a cultural mismatch between the teacher's and students' perceptions of what constituted appropriate humour.

Despite these challenges, the findings suggest that with appropriate strategies, teachers can effectively manage humour in the classroom to enhance learning and foster an inclusive environment. One key strategy identified in the study was the development of humour competence, which involves the ability to recognise and appropriately respond to humorous actions, even when they are expressed in a language or cultural context different from one's own. In this study, humour competence is understood as the teacher's pragmatic ability to interpret, adapt, and integrate humorous actions into the instructional frame without losing pedagogical focus (Kotthoff, 2006; Thielemann, 2017). Teachers who demonstrated higher humour competence were able to reframe student humour productively, either by linking it to the lesson content or by translating it into a shared linguistic code. This reflects a form of meta-pragmatic awareness that supports inclusive participation and maintains interactional balance (Bell, 2009; Kotthoff, 2003; Walker 2021). Teachers who demonstrated a high level of humour competence were more successful in using humour to support their instructional goals and in maintaining positive classroom dynamics.

These findings confirm that humour in L2 classrooms operates as a multifunctional communicative practice rather than a binary phenomenon. It can simultaneously foster engagement, regulate participation, and challenge classroom hierarchies (Dynel, 2009; Tark, 2024). The analysis further underscores that the effectiveness of humour depends on the shared interpretive resources of teachers and learners—what Goffman terms the alignment of frames.

While these findings offer valuable insights into the pragmatic and interactional functions of humour, certain limitations must be acknowledged. As this study draws on the ApaeK corpus and a limited number of classroom observations, the findings represent specific communicative constellations and cannot be generalised to all L2 learning contexts. The analysis was qualitative and based primarily on transcribed verbal interactions; non-verbal and paralinguistic aspects of humour were not systematically captured. Future research could extend this approach through multimodal analysis, incorporating video data to explore gestures, facial expressions, and prosody as additional carriers of humorous meaning.

CONCLUSION

Humour is a double-edged sword in language teaching, particularly in multilingual classrooms. While it has the potential to enhance engagement, facilitate learning, and create a positive classroom atmosphere, it also carries the risk of causing misunderstandings and disruptions. Drawing on the ApaeK corpus, this study demonstrates that humorous actions are an integral part of classroom interaction, with both teachers and students contributing to their occurrence. Yet, humour in L2 classrooms emerges as a dynamic and context-dependent resource rather than a uniformly positive or negative phenomenon.

The analysis revealed that humour can lead to frame disruptions, especially when it involves students' native languages or culturally divergent forms of irony and teasing. This study highlights the importance of developing humour competence among teachers, enabling them to navigate the complexities of humour in a way that supports their instructional objectives and promotes an inclusive learning environment. These findings directly address the study's guiding questions concerning how humour manifests in L2 classrooms and how teachers manage its pedagogical and interactional challenges.

In theoretical terms, the study extends frame-based approaches to classroom discourse (Tark, 2024; Goffman, 1974) by illustrating how humour can temporarily shift participation frameworks and how such shifts are negotiated in multilingual contexts. This perspective contributes to a more nuanced understanding of humour as a communicative strategy that simultaneously supports learning and indexes social relations (Bell, 2009; Kotthoff, 2006; Thielemann, 2017; Walker 2021; Ziyacemehr & Kumar, 2014).

By understanding and effectively managing the use of humour, teachers can harness its benefits while minimising its potential downsides, ultimately contributing to more effective and enjoyable language learning experiences. For teacher education, these findings underscore the need to cultivate humour competence through reflective practice and intercultural awareness. Training modules could include the analysis of authentic classroom interactions, discussions of cross-cultural humour norms, and role-play scenarios that involve humorous breakdowns. Such approaches would enable future teachers to develop

conscious sensitivity to humour's pragmatic and cultural dimensions in linguistically diverse settings.

While humour cannot be fully controlled or standardised, it can be more consciously understood and pedagogically integrated. Future research should explore how different types of humour such as self-irony, linguistic play, or peer teasing interacts with language proficiency, group dynamics, and teacher identity in multilingual classrooms.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the findings of this study are limited by the nature of the data. The analysis is based primarily on transcribed verbal interactions from the ApaeK corpus and a small number of classroom observations; consequently, multimodal dimensions of humour such as gestures, facial expressions, and prosody could not be systematically analysed. Moreover, as the data reflect specific school contexts and classroom constellations, the results cannot be generalised to all L2 teaching situations. These limitations, however, point to promising directions for future research that integrates multimodal and comparative perspectives.

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Enhancing Language Activities in L2 Support Lessons (German) Through Creativity in Primary School

Dennis Tark

Department of German Language and Literature, Institute of Primary Education, University of Rostock, Kröpeliner Str. 57, 18055 Rostock, Germany

ABSTRACT

Creativity plays a critical role in enhancing language activities in second language support lessons, particularly in primary school settings. This study explores the integration of creative techniques, such as appliqué and comics, in German as a Second Language (L2) instruction, emphasising their potential to facilitate linguistic creativity and comprehension. By combining visual arts with language tasks, students engage more deeply with linguistic material, transitioning from basic word responses to more complex sentence structures. The research draws on both classroom interventions and ongoing fieldwork to demonstrate the effectiveness of these methods in promoting language development and cultural awareness in young learners.

Keywords: Appliqué, comics, creativity, language development, primary school, second language support lessons, visual literacy

INTRODUCTION

In the context of modern education, creativity is increasingly recognised as a crucial skill, not just within the arts but across all areas of learning. The Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy (Wagner & Schönau, 2016) underscores creativity as an essential 21st-century skill that extends beyond traditional artistic activities. For primary school students, particularly those learning German as a second language, creative methods provide valuable tools for exploring linguistic

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E-mail address:

Dennis Tark (dennis.tark@uni-rostock.de)

patterns and making sense of their environment and experiences (Schäfer, 2001). By combining visual arts with speaking and writing tasks, teachers can significantly enhance language learning for young students, fostering both linguistic creativity and deeper engagement with the material (Moraitis 2018; Okonska et al., 2018).

This study focuses on the integration of creative techniques, specifically appliqué and comics, in German as a Second Language (L2) support lessons for primary school students learning German. In this study, the appliqué technique refers to a creative and tactile activity in which learners design visual representations of narrative content by cutting and assembling coloured paper figures and motifs onto a background surface. This process transforms textual input into a visual and material form, enabling learners to reinterpret and reconstruct story elements through aesthetic composition. It functions as a linguistic scaffold, fostering verbal interaction, descriptive language, and narrative coherence by anchoring speech and writing tasks in concrete, self-created imagery. Appliqué, which involves cutting and pasting figures and motifs onto a surface, serves as a particularly effective medium for young learners to express their ideas, engage with the ideas of others, and promote discourse (Abraham, 2014). The comic technique, by contrast, involves guided visual storytelling through sequences of drawings combined with short texts or dialogues. In this approach, learners create narrative structures (characters, actions, and dialogues) around thematic prompts such as hero journeys. The integration of visual and verbal elements supports narrative thinking, sequential organisation, and pragmatic language use, while encouraging creativity and multimodal expression in L2 learning contexts. The study investigates how these creative activities can be used to enhance linguistic creativity, moving students from one-word responses to more complex sentence structures and improving their overall language skills.

RELATED LITERATURE

Creativity in education has been the subject of extensive research, particularly in its role in language development. According to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education's report, creativity is defined as "imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value," (Great Britain, 1999, p. 30). This broad understanding of creativity allows for its application across various domains, including language learning. In primary education, creativity is seen as a means of engaging students in a way that traditional methods may not, facilitating both cognitive and emotional development.

Previous studies have demonstrated that integrating creative arts with language instruction can lead to significant improvements in language acquisition, particularly for young learners (Okonska et al., 2018). Moraitis (2018) emphasises that activities combining artistic production with language tasks not only enhance linguistic skills but also promote

a deeper connection to the material, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable for students. This is particularly important in L2 instruction, where engagement and motivation are key to overcoming the challenges of learning a new language.

Wagner and Schönau (2016) and other scholars like Schäfer (2001) have highlighted the importance of visual literacy and its role in supporting language development. Visual arts, such as appliqué and comics, provide a multimodal approach to learning, enabling students to express themselves creatively while also engaging with linguistic material (Tark, 2024). This approach is particularly effective in multilingual classrooms, where students may have varying levels of language proficiency. By using visual arts, teachers can create differentiated, learner-oriented lessons that cater to the needs of all students, regardless of their language abilities.

METHODS

To examine linguistic and creative developmental processes, a mixed-methods design was employed, combining qualitative-exploratory approaches with quantitative measures such as sentence-length counts. This study combined classroom interventions with ongoing field research to explore the impact of creative techniques on language learning in L2 support lessons. Data collection included parental questionnaires, interviews with parents and workshop facilitators (at the Berlin site), interviews with student teachers (at the Rostock site), audio recordings and photographic documentation of the children's creative work, as well as passive and participatory observation.

The school-based intervention was conducted over two 45-minute lessons in a primary school in Rostock, Germany. The participants included 13 children from migrant backgrounds, divided into two subgroups based on their language proficiency. Each subgroup was supervised by two student teachers in their 3rd or 4th semester of teacher training. The lessons combined fable reading with appliqué work and included a writing task in which the children were asked to create a continuation of the fable. The activities were designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing for differentiation based on students' language proficiency levels.

The extracurricular field site was a Berlin library, where a recurring workshop on comic creation was observed over the course of one year. The workshops were attended by 7 to 12 primary school children, including native German speakers and recently arrived Russian-speaking children. The sessions were guided by workshop facilitators using the "Hero's Journey" framework, based on Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In contrast to the Rostock intervention, the Berlin workshop focused exclusively on the creation of comics as a means of narrative and linguistic expression.

Analysis of the major part of the collected data followed a multi-stage qualitative process: audio recordings and interviews were systematically transcribed and coded,

observation notes and photographic materials were analysed using qualitative content analysis, and the results from the different data sources were triangulated. Interviews with parents and workshop facilitators in Berlin and with student teachers in Rostock served to verify interpretations and to compare the observed language development with earlier sessions. This approach produced a comprehensive picture of the learning processes, which was regularly validated through member checking with the participants.

To control for potential confounding factors such as language barriers and additional learning effects from the writing task following the creative activity, a comparison group at the Rostock school worked on the writing task without the appliqué activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the classroom interventions indicate that the integration of creative techniques, such as appliqué and comics, can significantly enhance language learning in L2 support lessons. The visual and hands-on nature of these activities made them accessible and engaging for all students, including those with lower language proficiency. The use of appliqué, in particular, allowed students to express their ideas visually, which facilitated their ability to articulate these ideas verbally and in writing.

One of the key outcomes of the intervention and the extracurricular ASL workshops in Berlin was the improvement in students' ability to construct complete sentences. Initially, many students were only able to produce one-word responses or very short sentences. As they engaged with the appliqué and comics activities, they began to use more complex sentence structures, both orally and in writing. This was particularly evident in students like "Michael" and "Ella" (pseudonyms), who were initially reserved in their language use but showed significant progress in their ability to express themselves by the end of the intervention. The students initially began to produce quantitatively longer sentences and to link sentence elements more frequently by incorporating conjunctions and connecting words such as "then," "and," "because," and "that," while increasingly using new or previously individually infrequent nouns. Their utterances demonstrated greater coherence, shifting from isolated one-word sentences to short narrative sequences that combined description, cause, and consequence. At the Berlin site, sustainable progress was observed, facilitated by the longer implementation period and the deliberate use of a broader range of connecting words in sentences, as well as a focus on the oral and written production of coherent stories. Quantitative measures of sentence length and lexical growth at both the Rostock and Berlin sites support these qualitative observations. In contrast, the comparison group at the Rostock school, which worked on the writing task alone without any accompanying creative activity, showed no clearly observable improvement in sentence complexity or lexical diversity. However, as the school-based intervention was limited to only two 45-minute lessons, the long-term sustainability of these effects remains uncertain.

The use of fables combined with appliqué proved to be particularly effective in activating language use. Fables, with their relatable content and moral lessons, provided a rich context for students to engage with the language. By creating appliqués that illustrated the fables, students were able to connect the visual and linguistic aspects of the lesson, which helped them better understand and use the language.

The findings also highlight the importance of creativity in promoting linguistic and cognitive development in young learners. The creative activities not only improved language skills but also fostered independence, self-confidence, and identity formation. These outcomes are consistent with the broader literature on creativity in education, which emphasises its role in supporting holistic development in children.

While the data indicate a clear association between the creative activities and language gains, causality must be interpreted with care. The classroom and workshop contexts introduced multiple interacting factors, such as peer collaboration, increased exposure to German input, and teacher feedback, that may have complemented the effects of appliqué and comics. Efforts were made to address this through the inclusion of a comparison group engaging in the same writing task without creative scaffolds. Nevertheless, research in the field of aesthetic education for primary school children suggests that creative methods and techniques play a significant role in children's learning, identity development, and exploration of the world, and can thus serve as catalysts for more active and creative language use. In this regard and in comparison with the previously obtained results at the Berlin site, through the contrast with the control group at the Rostock site, and via member checking, the relationships between the employed methods and the observed outcomes can be at least partially confirmed.

CONCLUSION

The integration of creative techniques such as appliqué and comics in L2 support lessons offers a powerful tool for enhancing language learning in primary school students. These activities engage students in a multimodal learning experience that supports both linguistic and cognitive development. The findings from this study suggest that such creative approaches can help students progress from basic language use to more complex sentence structures, improving their overall language proficiency.

Moreover, the use of visual arts in language instruction promotes a more inclusive and differentiated learning environment, catering to the diverse needs of students with varying language abilities. By fostering creativity, teachers can create more engaging and effective language lessons that not only improve language skills but also contribute to the broader development of the child.

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Social Determinants of Linguistic Turn with Reference to a Diachronic Study of Two Indo-Aryan Languages

Deb Proshad Halder

Department of English, School of Social Sciences, Jashore Government Women's College, 7400 Jashore, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

The rise of open informatics systems, large language models (LLMs), and digital documentation practices raises critical questions about the role of power politics in the spread, succession, and standardisation of languages. Beyond linguistic imperialism, this study asks: What enables a language to succeed and become standardised when speakers worldwide now have open access to practice their preferred languages? This paper explores alternative factors in linguistic change, particularly standardisation and stigmatisation, through the lens of social determinants theory, which emphasises the role of social interaction and acceptance in linguistic shifts. Adopting a historical-comparative method, the study analyses secondary texts on Sanskrit and Bangla, two languages from the same family practiced historically in Bengal. The analysis reveals patterns of standardisation and stigmatisation, showing why Sanskrit declined while Bangla was standardised at a critical stage. The findings support the hypothesis that authoritative imposition alone cannot guarantee the standardisation of a language. Instead, widespread social use, flexibility in pronunciation, and the ability to accommodate diverse expressions enable a language to flourish and increase the likelihood of its standardisation. Future research should focus on empirical data to verify whether widespread social use, flexibility in pronunciation, and the ability of a language to accommodate diverse expressions help in strengthening the standardisation process.

Keywords: Linguistic turn, linguistic standardisation, linguistic stigmatisation, social determinism

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E-mail address:

Deb Proshad Halder (debproshadhalder@gmail.com)

INTRODUCTION

The 'Linguistic Turn' delineates a process of linguistic standardisation to stigmatisation or vice versa (Glock & Kalhat, 2016). This shifting is the gift of some socio-political or socio-cultural factors (Holmes, 2013), whereas the political or cultural agencies

interplay behind this process, which Phillipson (2009) terms as linguistic imperialism due to the deliberate imposition of the preferred language on the community. Specifically, power politics acts behind the standardisation-stigmatisation process (Romaine, 2000). Again, the Bengali community inherited Sanskrit as a religious legacy and English as a colonial legacy (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014); though, neither of them succeeded in replacing community practices. Then, the reality of glocalised village conception, in conjunction with the advancement of open informatics systems, generative AI, large language models (LLMs), and digital documentation practices, tends to limit the authority of politico-religious agencies over linguistic imposition. It does not mean, no community has its standardised language. Rather, it suggests that some factors work for linguistic determinism (Gordon, 2003) beyond the classical view of linguistic succession stated by Phillipson (2009) and Romaine (2000). The historical shift from Sanskrit to Bangla provides a revealing case study. Sanskrit, once the master register of the Indo-Aryan language family and the medium of Aryan scriptures and Brahminical practice, gradually lost its dominance. Despite the efforts of linguists like Panini and Patanjali to preserve its purity in religious and academic life, Sanskrit became stigmatised in Bengal, while Bangla, evolving from Prakrit, flourished as the language of common practice (Chatterjee, 2025). Exploring why Bangla succeeded where Sanskrit failed allows us to ask:

- a. Can linguistic succession be explained solely through power politics? And,
- b. Do other cultural and social factors determine a language's survival and growth?

This study has explored answers to the above questions to explain the following:

- c. What compels a language to be standardised beyond religious and political determinants?

The objectives of this study are to explore, investigate, and analyse the dynamics of language survival, growth, and standardisation apart from the paradigm of religious-political determinism.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, diachronic, and comparative research design. This confluence aimed to explore the paradigm of linguistic standardisation in the Indo-Aryan language context in reference to the Sanskrit and Bangla languages. No empirical data has been used in this study; rather, five secondary sources have been employed here as the primary dataset for historical and comparative inquiry, which functions as the textual foundation for tracing the courses of Sanskrit and Bangla. Particularly, *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language* (Houben et al.,

1996), *A History of Sanskrit Language* (Renau, 2005), *Whence Sanskrit?: A Brief History of Sanskrit Pedagogy in the West* (Tull, 2015), *A Collection of Linguistic Essays on the Bengali Language* (Azad, 2002), and *Bengali Language* (Chatterjee, 2025) helped this study as principal resources for identifying historical courses and drafting a comparative tabulation of these two languages. This study used a twofold analytical lens. Firstly, a diachronic analysis was employed to analyse the historical-religious-political shifts of dominance from Sanskrit to Bangla. This analytical lens puts special attention to the process of standardisation-stigmatisation beyond authoritative agency in the politico-religious terrain. Secondly, a comparative thematic analysis was undertaken to identify the themes of phonological flexibility, religious authority, social accessibility, and expressive capacity. This led to the development of a comparative analysis of how these factors shaped the respective destinies of Sanskrit and Bangla. A sociolinguistic framework was used to interpret the findings. Theories of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2009), sociolinguistic standardisation (Curzan et al., 2023; Labov, 2001), and social determinants of language change (Holmes, 2013), and Bangla succession theory by Shaw (2014) and Onarjo (2020) guided the discussion of whether only religious and political prestige helped to sustain a language, or whether adaptability and social belonging provided more conclusive explanation. The combination of document analysis, diachronic comparison, and a critical sociolinguistic framework enabled to capture of the rise of Bangla and decline of Sanskrit within a broader discourse of linguistic turn and succession.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An Alternative History behind the Succession of Bangla

Sanskrit had prominence over other Indo-Aryan languages, such as Prakrit (Bangla), due to its religious functionality. This led to Sanskrit reclaiming a gradual political favour (Houben et al., 1996) as the religious scriptures of the Aryans, who converted the native people to their religious belief, were written in Sanskrit, and the religious preachers, Brahmins, were highly supported and protected by political authorities. Again, the linguist and grammarian Panini positioned this language as spiritual and heavenly through his grammar (Renau, 2005), and the use of the language was restricted only to those who knew grammar and used it in religious activities. Alternatively, the common people, ‘Prakrit Jona’ by their native name, communicated through the Prakrit language, transforming to the current Bangla. Many Sanskrit pundits have tried to prove Prakrit as other register emerging from Sanskrit, the master register (Ayres-Bennett & Bellamy, 2021; Curzan et al., 2023), and they codified Prakrit or Bangla with the help of Sanskrit grammar, letters, and a maximum number of Sanskrit morphemes to retain lineage connection (Azad, 2002), which comply with Phillipson’s (2009) theory of establishing the superiority of English through language control in academia. Yet, Sanskrit failed to spread across the

communities, underscoring the fact that religious consideration does not comply with linguistic consideration when a language cannot pass through the practice of common people due to a lack of belongingness (Shaw, 2014). Thus, the propositions of elitedom (Holmes, 2013), linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2009), and linguistic hegemony (Zeng & Yang, 2024) fail to justify the succession of Bangla, though Sanskrit possessed all the qualities of being an imperialist language. This discussion verifies the stance curated at the first research question that religious favouritism and power politics cannot ensure a linguistic succession. Conversely, one of the determinants that leads a language to succeed is linguistic belongingness, implying a practiced language by the commoners in a society, which affirmatively responds to the second research question.

Flexibility Principle behind Phonemic Merging

The Sanskrit honorifics tried to Sanskritise Bangla through an academic process to retain the prestige of Sanskrit and raise the practice due to their identical alphabet source and vowel-consonant symbols. However, Bangla sounds experienced reversal. Sanskrit has three /ra/ sounds: cerebral (ठ-ra), fricative (ड-ra), and frontal palate (ढ-ra), though Bangla speech lacks the cerebral /ra/. Instead, aspirated /ra/ is expressed through fricative /ra/, and unaspirated /ra/ is expressed through frontal palate /ra/. Finally, the cerebral /ra/ letter has been deduced from the Bangla alphabet list. Again, Sanskrit has three /sa/: dental /sa/, palatal /sa/ and cerebral /sa/. However, the Sanskrit cerebral /sa/ merges into the palatal /sa/ in Bangla speech. Hence, the speech sounds can detect dental /sa/ for short /sa/ and palatal /sa/ for the long /sa/, though the Bangla alphabet retains three /sa/ letters as convention (Tull, 2015). Labov (2001) stated that institutional imposition and authority help to retain phonological merger, and Baranowski (2013) suggests that linguistic change is often difficult when it becomes intellectual and cultural inheritance. These theories experienced reversal in Bangla sounds, adopted from Sanskrit. Flexibility won over inheritance in the Bangla sound system. This argument states that linguistic constituents determine which language can survive among people. This flexibility theory supersedes the politico-religious imposition of a language, answering the third research question.

Semantic Convergence

The LLMs and open informatics have transformed language into an important tool for communication. The theory of language standardisation as a process of politico-economic power (Curzan et al., 2023) can be critiqued, while AI has reshaped the presence of central authority in imposing a language. In this emerging phenomenon, a language sustains that embraces diversity in accents, vocabularies, and semantic convergences. Onarjo (2020) has argued that Bangla has been established with the confluence of 54 indigenous regional languages, and it has embraced Sanskrit, half-Sanskrit, transformed Sanskrit, native, and

foreign vocabularies into its register. In reverse, Sanskrit was developed with the vocabulary of the Vedic language. Hence, Bangla succeeded as the language of the wider community. Bolger et al. (2008) expressed this phenomenon that when cultural amalgamation takes place, morphemes of a distinct region embrace a fixed connotation. For instance, “Allah”, the Supreme Being, is amorphous according to Islam. Again, the Aryan underscores “Brahma” as the Morpheus Supreme Being. Now, the entanglement of these two cultures leads to jeopardising the sectoral concepts infused in the morphemes, and people tend to fill in the gap with a third neutral conception, or use those concepts as per the demand of the context. Thus, a linguistic compromise takes place for communication. As Bangla borrows words from diverse sources, it turns out to be a vibrant language, and Sanskrit loses its diversity in this regard, coupled with its stigmatisation. Thus, the above findings comply with the third question, which seeks to find out the operating factors for linguistic standardisation.

CONCLUSION

The diachronic comparative study of Sanskrit and Bangla enlightens that a linguistic succession entrusts to sociolinguistic aspects: community belongingness, free from restrictive rules of language use and sanctity in public accents, and the ability to achieve semantic convergence. The reservation of Sanskrit to use in religious ceremonies by the Brahmins (Tull, 2015) and the effort of keeping purity from merging led to limiting its use and restricting the inclusion of vocabularies from other sources that accelerated Bangla succession (Onarjo, 2020; Shaw, 2014) beyond Sanskrit.

The findings imply that the presence of essential components- elitism, religious and economic-politico dimensions, authoritative control- for linguistic imperialism is not universal. In reverse, there are stories of sociolinguistic dimensions in the linguistic succession paradigm. This study has used secondary sources as research data. Future research may use empirical data to test whether phonological flexibility and semantic convergence lead to standardising a language and whether these are essential components. Again, future research may explore what situations lead an elitist language to give way to a commoner language in succession.

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Effects of Interlocutor Familiarity on Language Diversity in Autistic Children

Wan Lin Zhu*, Adriana Chee Jing Chieng, and Tze Peng Wong

University of Nottingham Malaysia, 43500 Semenyih, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Children differentiate and diversify their lexicons and syntactic structures when interacting with different interlocutors to improve mutual understanding. Autistic children may not be able to adapt language features as flexibly as their typically developing (TD) peers, resulting in challenges in expressing intentions effectively. Thus far, there is limited evidence on the language diversity of autistic children when interacting with interlocutors of different familiarity levels, particularly in online conversations. This study examined the effects of interlocutor familiarity on the lexical and syntactic diversity of 10 Malaysian English-speaking autistic children aged 6-8 years old in online conversations. Each child interacted with their mother (familiar interlocutor) and an undergraduate student (unfamiliar interlocutor) through a 10-minute online role-play game. Using CLAN software, the children's lexical diversity was computed using Voc-D and syntactic diversity using the Index of Productive Syntax (IPSyn) subscales. Our analysis showed that the lexical and syntactical diversity of autistic children is not influenced by interlocutor familiarity. This study's findings are preliminary and have implications for informing scaffolding strategies in online contexts.

Keywords: Autistic children, computerised language analysis, familiarity with interlocutors, lexical diversity, online conversations, syntactic diversity

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E-mail addresses:

Wan Lin Zhu (wanlin.zhu@connect.polyu.hk)

Adriana Chee Jing Chieng (adrianajanicecjcj@gmail.com)

Tze Peng Wong (TzePeng.Wong@nottingham.edu.my)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Speakers often modify their utterances based on their belief in their conversational partner's knowledge to achieve mutual understanding (Bell, 1984). These modifications include lexical and syntactic choices and may require social cognition abilities, including social perception and Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen, 1990). Most studies have shown that typically

developing (TD) children exhibit more engagement and can flexibly diversify their lexicons and syntactic structures when interacting with familiar than unfamiliar interlocutors during both in-person and online conversations (Dao et al., 2021; Levi, 2015). However, relatively less attention has been given to the language diversity of autistic children, particularly in online conversations.

Autistic children, characterised by difficulties in ToM may find it challenging to flexibly adapt language features during daily communications due to mindreading difficulties, restricted use of word types and syntactic structures, and reduced conversational initiation and maintenance (Peterson et al., 2009). Understanding their structural language output in online conversations could provide preliminary data to inform tailored strategies for enhancing engagement and conversation outcomes in online distance education and teleintervention. Ages 6-8 represent a critical transition to school-age language development, where linguistic demands and complexity increase significantly across both educational and social contexts (Shiel et al., 2012). Analysing their structural differences in this period could reveal how conversational patterns are shaped by interlocutor familiarity constraints.

Therefore, this present study compares the lexical and syntactic diversity of autistic children when interacting with two groups of interlocutor familiarity in online conversations.

METHODS

This study analysed a subset of data from a larger study that examines online adult-child interactions (FRGS/1/2020/SKK06/UNIM/03/1). 10 English-speaking Malaysian autistic children aged 6 to 8 years old, their mothers and 10 undergraduate students were recruited. The children's language skills, measured using the CELF-5 (Wiig et al., 2003), were lower than age-matched neurotypical peers reported in Chieng et al. (2024) study. Each child participated in two 10-minute online sessions: one with their mother and another with a student in a counterbalanced order, through the Toca Kitchen activity. This conversational activity is set in a semi-structured role-play cooking scenario, where the child and the adult take turns as the chef and customer, reflecting their daily communication in a way that closely resembles real social interactions. This semi-structured setting facilitates children to produce language in a flexible but guided manner, they were expected to talk about the aspects of the cooking scenario they found most engaging. Utilising the CLAN program (MacWhinney & Erlbaum, 2000), lexical diversity was measured using Voc-D (Malvern et al., 2004) and syntactic diversity was measured using IPSyn (Altenberg et al., 2018). Statistical analyses were conducted through *t*-test and repeated-measure ANOVA to address our research questions.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

The procedures were approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Nottingham Malaysia (ref no: FASS2022-0009/SoEd/ACC20386343). Adult participants of this study provided written consent, and all children gave their verbal assent on Zoom with their guardians. All the participants' data were uniquely coded to ensure anonymity and were only accessed by the researchers for confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the t -test showed no significant difference in the children's lexical ($t(10) = 0.42$, $p = 0.69$) and syntactic diversity ($t(7) = 1.75$, $p = 0.13$) when interacting with different interlocutor types (Figures 1 and 2). As we did not observe differences in syntactic diversity, further analysis was conducted using repeated-measure ANOVA to examine the two-way interaction between the IPSyn subscales (i.e., noun phrases, verb phrases, sentence structures) and the interlocutor types. The findings showed a main effect of the subscales, $F(2,36) = 3.57$, $p = 0.038$, and post-hoc Tukey analyses indicated that the use of sentence structures was higher than noun phrases regardless of interlocutor familiarity.

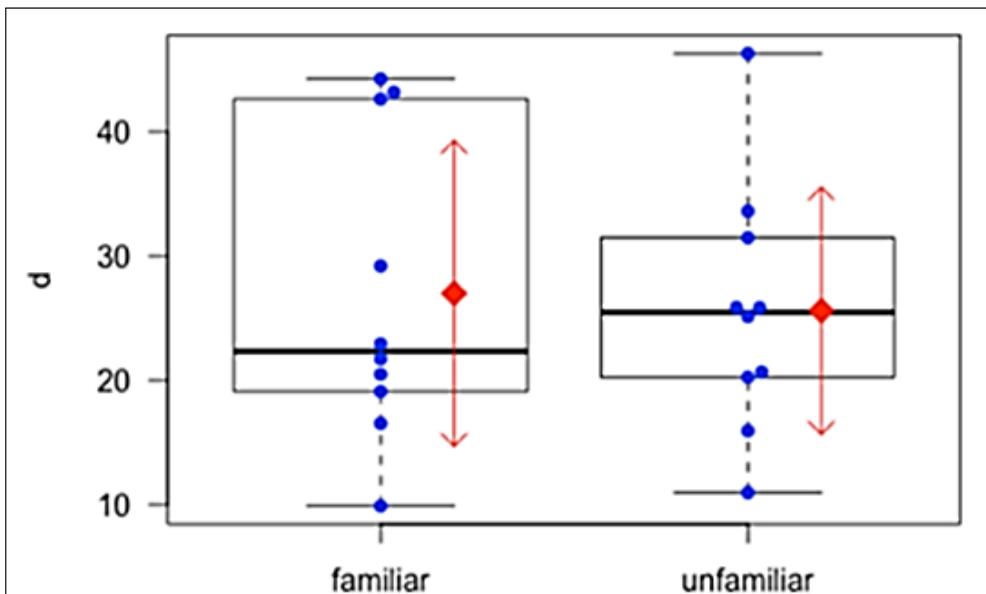


Figure 1. Box plot of autistic children's lexical diversity with familiar and unfamiliar interlocutor

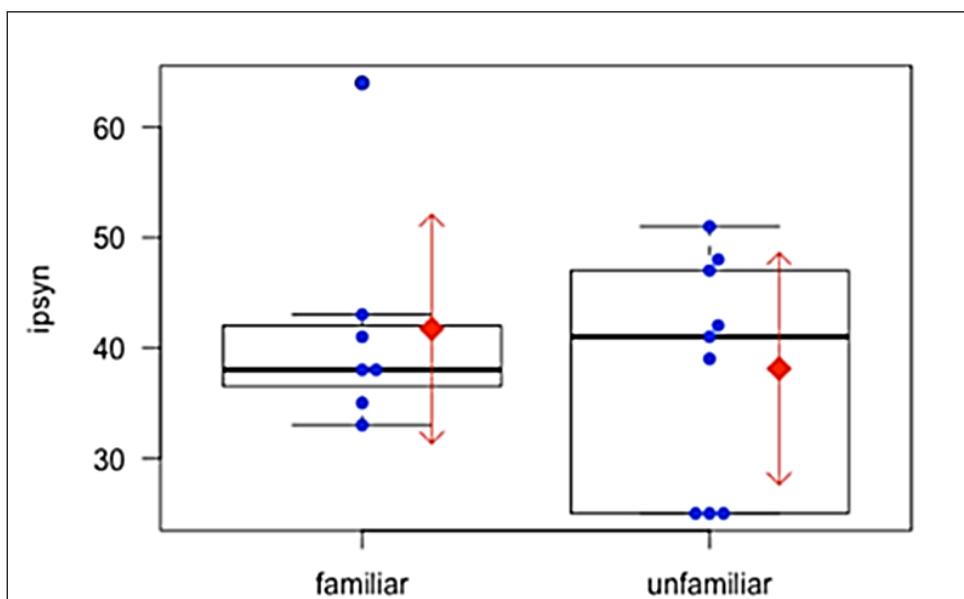


Figure 2. Box plot of autistic children's syntactical diversity with familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors

The lack of interlocutor-type effects could be attributed to different explanations. First, autistic children in this study demonstrate lower language proficiency and use mainly simple sentence structures as indicated by IPSyn; therefore, the predominant use of basic syntactic structures limits differences in language diversity when interacting with interlocutors. Second, children's difficulties with ToM, as suggested by the literature, which hinder their ability to adjust language flexibly (Fisher et al., 2005). On contrary to ToM, the double empathy problem posits that breakdowns in mutual understanding can occur between individuals with different dispositions and experiences. Such breakdowns likely occurred when adults have difficulty to be flexible in communication with autistic children (Rachanska, 2025). Furthermore, the methodological constraints of IPSyn resulted in the loss of valuable information, as three children produced fewer than 50 complete utterances. Lastly, this study used conversational tasks to elicit naturalistic language samples, whereas past studies (e.g., Lenhart et al., 2022) have found that syntactic complexity varies by tasks, with conversational child speech showing less complex sentence structures while more structured expository language speech shows greater syntactic complexity. Therefore, compared to past studies that used more structured elicitation methods, this study's naturalistic tasks may contribute to lower observed syntactic complexity regardless of interlocutor familiarity.

CONCLUSION

These preliminary findings indicated no effect of interlocutor familiarity on the lexical and syntactic diversity of the 10 autistic children within one type of online interaction. The lack of flexibility in adjusting language features and using basic syntactic structures has implications for scaffolding strategies aimed at broadening the use of vocabulary and complex syntactic structures that support precise expressions of nuances or complex thoughts. Future studies might consider replicating these findings with larger sample sizes across different conversational contexts and with control groups to enhance the generalisability of the results.

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Translingual Practices in Japanese EFL Classrooms: Challenging Monolingual Norms and Shaping Multilingual Identities

Maki Hignett

Language Education Center, Nagoya University, 464-8601 Nagoya, Japan

ABSTRACT

The study investigates how university students in Japan employ their linguistic resources in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and the impact on their translingual identities. Translingualism in this context refers to the practice of using a diverse linguistic repertoire, including one's first language (L1). Despite the global shift towards linguistic diversity, EFL education in Japan often adheres to monolingual norms, potentially fostering native speakerism, which limits the development of multilingual identities. In response to these challenges, this research explores how students navigate such environments and how their engagement in translingual practices influences their identity construction. Data were collected from 120 students via questionnaires and narrative interviews with 20 of them. These data underwent thematic analysis, with additional insights derived from a multilayered framework of social activity. The findings suggest that embracing multilingualism could serve as a pedagogically enriching resource rather than an obstructive hindrance, contesting the entrenched discouragement against the use of students' L1 Japanese in EFL settings. By offering a nuanced understanding of translingual practices among Japanese university students, this research contributes to the burgeoning discourse on multilingualism in language education. Consequently, it calls for a reconsideration of monolingual to multilingual pedagogical approaches in Japanese EFL contexts, thereby promoting a more inclusive and diversified language-learning environment.

Keywords: EFL in Japanese university context, multilingual identities, monolingual norms, native speakerism, translingualism

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E-mail address:

Maki Hignett (hignett.maki.m7@f.mail.nagoya-u.ac.jp)

INTRODUCTION

In today's ever-globalising society, English serves as a vital medium for communication across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. The enhancement of English education has thus become a national

educational priority in Japan. There is a strong emphasis on fostering comprehensive communicative abilities that include not only an understanding of diverse cultures but also the maintenance of one's identity as a Japanese national (MEXT, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to engage in classroom activities that nurture students' global perspectives while respecting their sociocultural backgrounds. In line with this approach, this study views learners as translinguals, utilising a diverse linguistic repertoire that includes their L1. It investigates how Japanese university students employ their linguistic resources in EFL classrooms and how these practices influence their translingual identities.

RELATED LITERATURE

Current perspectives on language education emphasise learners' multilingualism rather than solely on target language proficiency (Krulatz & Christison, 2023; May, 2019). This shift challenges the entrenched influence of monolingualism in language education, particularly English monolingualism, where learners' existing languages are often excluded (Wei, 2018). In Japan, however, the perception that EFL learners are monolingual remains prevalent, influenced by a pervasive ideology of native speakerism (Turnbull, 2020). This often leads students to prioritise monolingual norms over the creative use of their multilingual resources, reflecting societal discourses that privilege English over linguistic diversity (Kato & Kumagai, 2022). While affirming learners' identities facilitates language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2023), such monolingual biases may hinder the development of multilingual identities (Berthele, 2021).

Language learners are increasingly seen as utilising all their linguistic resources within an integrated repertoire that transcends linguistic boundaries (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). This perspective is reflected in the notions of language as a flexible resource, adaptable to sociocultural and communicative needs (Canagarajah, 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Jørgensen, 2008; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Consequently, the goal of EFL education is more widely recognised as the integrated use of multiple languages, including learners' L1. However, the idea that EFL learners are multilingual speakers has not gained significant traction in Japan's educational context (Turnbull, 2019). Therefore, this study considers learners as language users who engage in translingual practices and aims to contribute to an educational environment that better supports the development of language and identity.

METHODS

This study adopts a narrative inquiry methodology to investigate the translingual practices of Japanese university students. Narrative inquiry explores how participants make sense of their subjective realities, providing insights into how they interpret their experiences of identity construction both as individuals and in relation to others (Barkhuizen, 2014). This approach is particularly suitable for examining individuals' navigation of complex

linguistic and social contexts, as it integrates personal narratives with broader theoretical frameworks. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to 120 students in compulsory general education English classes, complemented by interviews with 20 selected participants. These students were part of an English-only curriculum as a compulsory general education course across departments, regardless of proficiency levels. The data were initially analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes. The themes were then further examined, guided by the multilayered frameworks proposed by the Douglas Fir Group (2016) and Barkhuizen (2016), which align in their focus on social activity across different levels. The Douglas Fir Group's framework is organised in terms of dimensions of social activity, represented by micro, meso, and macro levels, which can also be understood from Barkhuizen's narrative perspective as three contextual levels—story, Story, and STORY (Barkhuizen, 2016). These scales of context extend the analysis beyond individual micro-level interactions to consider broader contextual influences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed insights into three key areas. The first is the role of ideologies both within and outside the classroom. Many students reported that when they are required to use only English in the classroom, they feel considerable peer pressure to avoid making mistakes, which makes them even more reluctant to use the language. One student explained, "I don't want to speak English in class unless I'm confident in doing it perfectly because I'm afraid of being embarrassed." Additionally, as none of the students were language majors, they often questioned the necessity of immersing themselves in English. Another student observed, "We're told we need to be able to speak English, so it's [the course is] mandatory, but to be honest, I don't really feel the need for it if I'm just in Japan," particularly because they felt that their future professional contexts in Japan would not require use of English. These perceptions reflect underlying ideologies: the pressure to speak English flawlessly like a native speaker and the belief that English holds limited value in Japan, reinforced by societal discourses (Kato & Kumagai, 2022; Turnbull, 2020).

The second area is the impact of using Japanese during class activities. One student noted, "I can't think in English, and I feel relieved when we're allowed to discuss things in Japanese during class. I can confirm my understanding with my classmates, which makes learning more efficient." This suggests that an English-only policy might inadvertently reduce learning effectiveness by limiting students' ability to leverage their full linguistic repertoire. Such policies often fail to account for the multilingual realities present in classroom settings (Heugh, 2021).

Thirdly, the data brought attention to pedagogical and institutional constraints. The requirement to use English exclusively resulted in obstacles. One student shared, "During writing assignments, we have to do even the brainstorming and outlining all in English

because the native [English-speaking] teachers don't understand Japanese. I feel like it's not for our benefit." This illustrates how a lack of accommodation for Japanese can make the learning process more challenging and counterproductive, exposing the limitations of monolingual norms in addressing learners' diverse needs and goals (Anderson, 2023). Institutional policies enforcing monolingual practices, along with native-speaking teachers often framing their inability to speak Japanese as part of their role as English instructors, create a language barrier, limiting teachers' capacity to fully support students' learning, ultimately diminishing the overall classroom experience.

These findings underscore the importance of focusing on learners' multilingual resources in EFL classrooms, revealed by the interplay between individual activity, classroom dynamics, and broader institutional and ideological structures. By promoting translanguaging practices within the multifaceted complexities that learners navigate, educators can create what can be termed a *pedagogical safe house* (Canagarajah, 2004) or *translingual safe house* (Qin & Llosa, 2023). Such environments provide legitimate participation opportunities for students (Lave & Wenger, 1991), allowing them to engage more fully in their learning process. Instead of conforming to native-speaker norms, it is crucial to value students' potential bilingualism.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that Japanese university students desire to use their full linguistic repertoire, navigating between Japanese and English in their learning processes. Translanguaging practices were found to contribute to a sense of security and effectiveness in learning. However, the emphasis on monolingual norms in the classroom prevents students from fully embracing their translanguaging identities. By promoting more inclusive learning environments that recognise students' linguistic resources, EFL education in Japan should empower students to engage in a world where linguistic diversity and the effective use of English are embraced as cornerstones of meaningful global interaction.

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Navigating the Doctoral Journey: Towards Possibilities of Decolonisation-informed Dispositions

Leslie Huishan Li

School of Foreign Languages, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, 266061 Qingdao, China

ABSTRACT

This paper is derived from an ongoing longitudinal ethnographic study exploring Chinese doctoral students' trajectories across different stages of their PhD programs. Guided by the South Theory and academic discourse socialisation frameworks, the original project aims to explore how doctoral students in their academic trajectories interact with complex nexus of communities and hierarchies. Using two excerpts from the larger dataset, this paper captures 1) the presence of essentialist assumptions premised upon Global North-South binaries, and 2) the embedded possibilities towards decolonisation-informed dispositions. These two data excerpts concern the most centred issue of the original project as well as the doctoral journey: academic writing and "academic language", framing decolonisation-informed dispositions in deference to translanguaging and multimodal repertoire-deploying communication. To that end, findings suggest the need for dismantling and reconceptualising what it can mean by such constructs as language structures, language prestige, and communication repertoire. While the original project explores decolonisation-informed training and support schemes for doctoral students in navigating their academic trajectories, this paper specifically invites further scholarly discussions on possibilities of cultivating awareness in day-to-day interactions.

Keywords: Academic language, academic socialisation, doctoral education, decolonisation, Global South

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E-mail address:

Leslie Huishan Li (lesliehsl@qust.edu.cn)

INTRODUCTION

The original project was drawing from lenses of the Southern theory and sociocultural frameworks of academic language socialisation, this project is situated in the transdisciplinary window of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. It explores the complexities

surrounding Chinese doctoral students' academic socialisation trajectories through tracing their language-and-literacy-relevant practices situated in multi-scalar chronotopes. The leading objective is not to compare, but to explore what kinds of dynamics (power, social, structural) function dominantly across micro, meso and macro contexts, and thereafter how the interplay of personal trajectories and these dynamics unfold in participants' narratives.

This paper selects sample data excerpts representing the central and survival-critical issue of the doctoral journey–academic writing and “academic language”, to discuss how embedded possibilities of awareness raising towards such dispositions are traceable in participants' mundane activities and should be given attention in nuanced ways.

RELATED LITERATURE

Decolonisation and the Southern Theory

There are roughly two main foci in current trends of decolonising education and academia (Collyer, 2018; Santos, 2014): one is to reinstate the knowledge systems previously made marginalised by colonial powers through paradigm enforcement and assumed universality. Another is to dismantle such power relations that sustain dominance, which set parameters of knowledge and knowers. The Southern Theory (Connell, 2018; Hamid, 2023) represents an assemblage of ontological and epistemological lenses that challenges any paradigms in subject- and context-dependent ways. The Southern theory does not aim to deny or exclude any ways of thinking but recognises the relational and interdependent nature of power relations and explores knowledge in non-universalising ways.

Academic Discourse Socialisation (ADS)

ADS has its roots in language socialisation: newcomers' socialisation through and into language practices of specific communities (Duff, 2010). The core concept, community of practice, deals with how newcomers gradually reach more central participation and positions, and thus become experienced members. Major directions of ADS studies include feedback uptake, newcomer-expert relationship, etc., and are now leading to multimodal literacies and oral discourse (Friedman, 2021; Kobayashi et al., 2017).

“Academic Language” and Unequal Englishes

The conception of “academic language” has been argued problematic by scholars, such as being context-reduced and treating language as discrete systems. Underlying these problems, just as decolonisation perspectives highlight, is how ideologies of language use and ability become predispositions of people, creating boundaries and deficit prescriptions (Corella, 2020; Heller & Morek, 2015). It has therefore been proposed to investigate the enregisterment processes surround academic language: how typifications of language use

become socially indexical and point to types of people (Rhodes et al., 2021). And with the fact that academic discourse is a melting pot of Englishes, to decolonise Englishes and language beliefs, and more generally to decolonise knowledge and education requires critical engagements in revisiting and dismantling hegemonic structures from relational sociocultural, sociopolitical, and historiographical scopes (Canagarajah, 2022; Tupas, 2021).

METHODS

The key solution towards tackling the abovementioned conundrums, as Canagarajah (2022) and Rose et al. (2022) have suggested, is to provide local answers to educational problems: to value the role of on-the-ground, granular adaptations and innovations in informing better practice. Thus, the original project adopts longitudinal ethnographic study to follow a small participant sample yet acquire holistic, in-depth, and otherwise unattainable data throughout doctoral students' academic life. Datasets are collected from semi-structured and informal interviews, shadowing observation, participant-provided text materials (e.g., essays/ articles, presentation slides, journals, experiment reports), social media posts, among others. Data analysis scheme of the project is illustrated in Figure 1.

As explained above, this paper presents two selected data excerpts and preliminary data analysis. It should be noted that any discussion in this paper is derived from the datasets and analysis of the original project

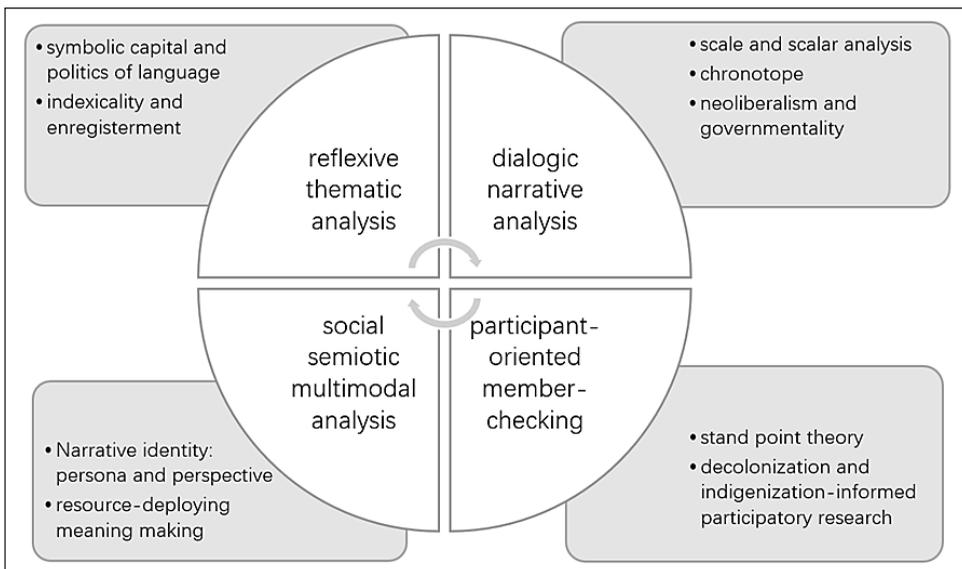


Figure 1. Data analysis scheme of the original project

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The excerpts (Figure 2) presented here are a page of participant M’s daily laboratory notes, and an extract of an informal discussion on this between M and the researcher (me, via WeChat, the dominant online messaging app in Mainland China). In the area highlighted in red, most disciplinary terms are written in English; by contrast, in other areas of this page as well as all other note pages provided by M, most contents are in Mandarin Chinese, as is the exclusive medium of instruction throughout her educational trajectory. M provides a rather playful account in our retrospective discussion on this case: “an after effect of reading and writing journal articles,” then continues with more specific reasons that the English terms are easier to write (certain Chinese terms have much more strokes, for example gliadin-麦醇溶蛋白) and some terms may “become ambiguous if translated into Chinese”.

For this piece of multimodal (texts, doodling illustrations, scratching symbols, page lines, etc.) and multilingual (English and Mandarin Chinese) work, M shows natural deployment of available meaning-making resources, consciously and unconsciously, out of on-site reaction from such criteria as convenience, utility, and meaning negotiation. Nevertheless, another natural reaction here is how Maozhi considers some disciplinary terms as “not easy to understand” when translated from English to Chinese, whereas such concern for potential ambiguity prioritises reproducing the meaning coded in the English version.

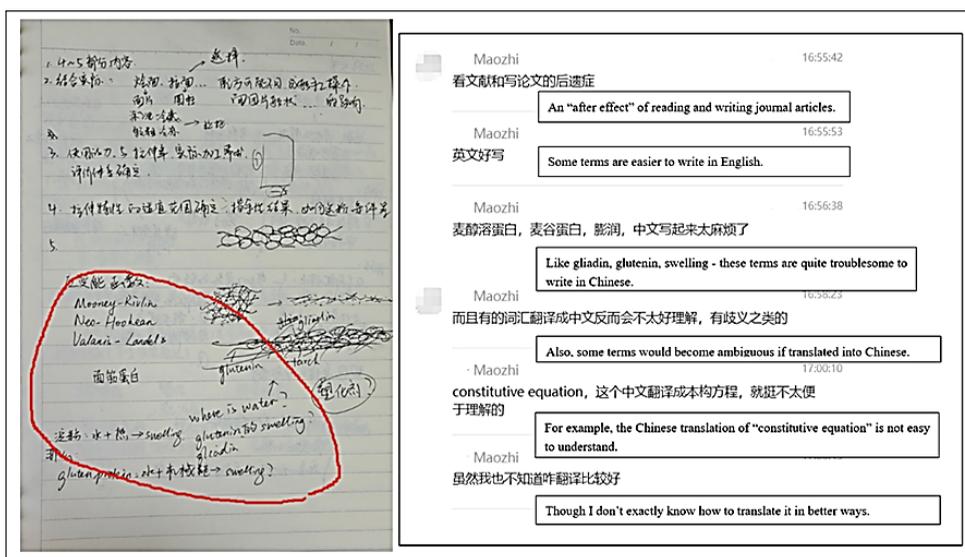


Figure 2. An extract of participant M’s laboratory notes and relevant discussion (highlighted and translated by the researcher, member-checked with the participant)

None other than a segment of data as such can explain how possibilities of awareness raising towards decolonisation-informed dispositions are evident in individuals' day-to-day activities and should receive attention. Individuals' perceptions on sets of norms, beliefs, and standards are traceable in their product-producing choices and explanations, carrying both assumptions forged by dominant discourse as well as possibilities towards cultivating new dispositions. In this specific case, this would require reconceptualising what it can mean by such constructs as language structures, language prestige, and resource/ repertoire-deploying communication.

CONCLUSION

M's self-doubting and conversation-fixing explanation shows the participant's spontaneous deployment and awareness of communication resources with or without consciously realising structures of oppression or possibilities of meaning-making systems. Such possibilities towards decolonisation-informed dispositions are often intertwined with dominant assumptions enregistered upon binary North-South understandings of relations and social meanings. Binaries, North-South relations, Englishes and academic language – whichever term to be used in essence tells the same truth about ever-present unequal power dynamics shaping dominant discourse, evaluating parameters, and altogether how individuals perceive selves against the social world. While such is the natural course within socialisation processes, possible changes are embedded in day-to-day bits and pieces towards altering dispositions, starting from what it can mean by a basic construct accompanied by self-recognition.

Aligning with the AILA2024 theme “Linguistic Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Sustainability”, this paper proposes doing decolonisation-informed linguistics fieldwork that emphasises context sensitivity, relational analyses, and constantly revisited positionality. This project calls for more inclusive and pedagogically effective support for research postgraduate students towards dispositions informed by translingualism, decolonisation, and multimodal repertoire-deploying communication; to provide local answers to educational problems; and to value the role of on-the-ground, granular adaptations

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Bridging Cultures: Enhancing Teachers' Intercultural Communication Competence in Higher Education Institutions in China

Xixi Lu* and Hadina Habil

Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Skudai, Johor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Under the great impact of globalisation, the internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) has become an inevitable trend, aiming to improve sustainable development and quality of education. To thrive in this global landscape, teachers must have strong intercultural communication competence (ICC). This quantitative small-scale study examines teachers' ICC in higher education institutions (HEIs) across China. A total of 57 teachers from international offices and English departments participated, with 30 from Hebei Province and 27 from other regions. Data were collected via an online questionnaire and analysed with SPSS software, utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicate that Chinese teachers possess basic intercultural knowledge and attitudes but lack behavioural competence. Teachers in Hebei Province exhibit lower ICC levels compared to the national average, with the intercultural cognitive aspect being the weakest. Additionally, the study found that teachers with higher ICC levels experience fewer instances of intercultural miscommunication (IM). Future educational efforts should prioritise enhancing intercultural affective aspects to improve overall ICC levels and specifically focus on training teachers in Hebei Province in intercultural cognitive competence. This study sheds light on the global need for educators to enhance their intercultural skills to bridge cultures effectively.

Keywords: China, higher education institutions, internationalisation, intercultural communication competence, teachers

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E-mail addresses:

Xixi Lu (luxixi@graduate.utm.my)

Hadina Habil (hadina@utm.my)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Many countries, especially in the post-epidemic era, have initiated efforts to promote internationalisation at home (IaH) as an effective approach for the internationalisation of universities and colleges (Li & Xue, 2023). Sercu (2023)

explained that IaH involves the intentional incorporation of international and intercultural elements into the formal curriculum for “all students” within domestic learning settings. It is increasingly important for university teachers to possess intercultural communication competence (ICC) to cultivate students with global perspectives (Zelenková & Hanesová, 2019). ICC includes intercultural cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects (Haregu et al., 2024). Lacking ICC is the main barrier to conducting helpful intercultural communication and will lead to intercultural miscommunication (IM) (Sarwari et al., 2024). Most studies focus on students’ ICC while little research has been done on teachers. Hebei Province is one of China’s most populous provinces, with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, this research seeks to examine the ICC levels and IM among teachers in Hebei and compare them with the national levels to identify and strengthen weak areas, ultimately promoting the internationalisation of Hebei’s HEIs. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the ICC levels of teachers within Hebei Province compared to those outside the province in China?
2. (What is the relationship between ICC and IM?)
3. How are the intercultural cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects related?

METHODS

This quantitative study uses an online questionnaire to investigate teachers’ ICC levels and IM problems. Using convenience sampling, a total of 57 teachers from international offices and English departments at internationalised HEIs in China participated, including 30 teachers from Hebei Province and 27 teachers from regions outside Hebei Province.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers’ ICC levels and IM situations with various aspects were tested, including ICC levels of teachers in China, the relationship among the ICC variables, and the relationship between ICC and IM.

General ICC Levels of Teachers in China

As shown in Table 1, teachers’ intercultural cognitive level is the highest (mean = 3.6737). Intercultural affective level is medium (mean = 3.6640). The intercultural behaviour level is the lowest (mean = 3.3620). It can be seen that teachers in HEIs in China have some basic intercultural knowledge and attitude, but intercultural behaviour is still lacking.

A Comparison of ICC Levels and IM Problems of Teachers in and Outside Hebei

Table 2 shows that teachers outside Hebei (mean = 3.6053) generally exhibit slightly higher ICC levels than those within Hebei (mean = 3.5318). Specifically, teachers outside Hebei show a higher mean value in intercultural cognitive levels compared to those in Hebei. In terms of intercultural affective and behaviour levels, the mean difference between the two groups is minimal. These statistics highlight specific areas of ICC that teachers in Hebei need to develop, especially intercultural cognitive levels. Additionally, the IM mean score of teachers outside Hebei is lower than that of teachers in Hebei. As a result, teachers of higher ICC levels tend to have less IM problems.

Table 1
Mean value of teachers' ICC levels in China

	Cognitive	Affective	Behaviour
Mean	3.6737	3.6640	3.3620

Table 2
Independent samples T-tests

	Identity	Mean
Cognitive	Teacher in	3.5967
	Teacher outside	3.7593
Affective	Teacher in	3.6350
	Teacher outside	3.6963
Behaviour	Teacher in	3.3636
	Teacher outside	3.3603
ICC	Teacher in	3.5318
	Teacher outside	3.6053
Miscommunication	Teacher in	3.1375
	Teacher outside	2.7106

Relationship Among the ICC Variables

Table 3 indicates that the correlations between intercultural cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects with overall ICC are 0.918, 0.919, and 0.907, respectively. This indicates that the relationship between intercultural affective levels and overall ICC is the strongest, suggesting that enhancing intercultural affective abilities is the most effective approach to improve teachers' ICC.

Table 3
Pearson correlation

	Cognitive	Affective	Behaviour
Cognitive			
Affective	0.751		
Behaviour	0.725	0.795	
ICC	0.918	0.919	0.907

CONCLUSION

Chinese HEIs have established a basic foundation for developing teachers' intercultural cognitive and affective aspects, but there is still a deficiency in behavioural competence. Moreover, teachers in Hebei exhibit lower ICC levels compared to the national average, especially in terms of intercultural knowledge. Enhancing affective aspects appears to be the most effective strategy for improving teachers' ICC and overcoming IM.

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Incidental Vocabulary Learning through Reading Online Consumer Electronics Reviews

Chun-Huei Chuo

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, 106335 Taipei, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Explicit vocabulary instruction is widely practiced in Taiwanese language classrooms, yet limited attention has been given to how learners can acquire vocabulary incidentally through authentic online reading. While both explicit and incidental learning are recognised as complementary processes in second language vocabulary acquisition, research on how incidental vocabulary learning occurs in digital contexts remains limited. In this study, incidental vocabulary learning is defined as the unintentional acquisition of new words that takes place as a by-product of meaning-focused reading, rather than through deliberate vocabulary study. This study aimed to develop an English reading course for Taiwanese undergraduates, utilising online consumer electronics reviews to promote incidental vocabulary learning. The study was organised into three stages. In Stage One, a corpus-based analysis was conducted, involving the creation and examination of a corpus of online consumer electronics reviews to generate a word list that later served as the basis for a vocabulary test. Stage Two encompassed a 12-week classroom investigation employing mixed methods in action research. This approach monitored learners through spirals of ‘planning, acting, observation, and reflection’ (Lewin, 1946), ensuring active reading involvement to investigate incidental vocabulary learning. A quasi-experimental design was used to assess students’ vocabulary gains. Stage Three examined students’ perceptions and experiences through focus group interviews. Quantitative findings indicated that students were able to acquire vocabulary incidentally through extensive online reading, while qualitative insights highlighted themes related to their experiences and strategies for handling unfamiliar words. This study provides an alternative approach to enhance students’ vocabulary acquisition and increase their reading motivation.

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E-mail address:

chuojoyce@gmail.com (chuojoyce@gmail.com)

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INTRODUCTION

As of April 2024, 5.44 billion people used the internet, representing 67.1% of the global population (Statista, 2024). This digital shift has transformed language through new communication technologies, such as social media and instant messaging (Nation & Macalister, 2020). The study aims to introduce Taiwanese students to English online discourse, which is often absent in local classrooms. Online consumer electronics reviews from the web magazine *Engadget* were used as authentic materials to promote incidental vocabulary learning and enhance reading motivation. These reviews provided real-life language exposure, crucial for students in the consumer electronics industry (Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010). This approach addresses the need for vocabulary development in specialised fields.

RELATED LITERATURE

Vocabulary learning is essential for second language proficiency, requiring learners to know a substantial number of words to comprehend texts effectively (Schmitt, 2010). Knowing a word encompasses various aspects, including its form, meaning, and use (Nation, 2020). Vocabulary knowledge can be categorised into receptive and productive dimensions (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004). Recent studies continue to emphasise that incidental learning, particularly guessing word meanings from context, is a crucial source of vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2022; Webb et al., 2023).

Incidental vocabulary learning occurs when learners acquire new words unintentionally, typically through extensive reading (Webb et al., 2023). This method complements explicit vocabulary instruction, creating a more holistic approach to language acquisition (Schmitt, 2010). Research demonstrates that incidental learning can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition, especially when learners are exposed to authentic reading texts (Nation & Waring, 2019). Extensive reading, defined as reading large amounts of material for enjoyment and general understanding, promotes incidental learning. Authentic materials, including internet discourse and online reviews, offer real-life language contexts that increase learner motivation and engagement (Li & Tsai, 2017; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010).

Corpus-based research, which analyses language patterns and vocabulary usage, also plays a crucial role in facilitating vocabulary development, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. Specialised corpora in ESP provide insights into domain-specific language (Hou, 2014). Genre analyses of online consumer reviews reveal distinct linguistic features valuable for language learning (Vasquez, 2014). However, research focusing on how digital reading environments foster incidental vocabulary acquisition remains limited, particularly in the Taiwanese higher education context. Addressing this gap, the present study develops and evaluates a corpus-based reading course using online

consumer electronics reviews to promote incidental vocabulary learning and learner engagement.

METHODS

The current study sought to investigate three research questions:

1. What is the vocabulary distribution in online consumer electronics reviews and how does it inform word list development?
2. Do students learn vocabulary incidentally through online reviews?
3. What are students' perceptions of learning vocabulary through online reading, and what strategies do they use for unfamiliar words?

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of incidental vocabulary learning (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This approach incorporated a corpus-based study, an action research-based classroom investigation, and focus group interviews to triangulate findings. The research was conducted in three stages.

In Stage One, a corpus of online consumer electronics reviews was created and analysed to establish a word list. The corpus consisted of 300 product reviews, containing 52,349 running words. This process involved collecting data from the reviews, analysing vocabulary frequency, and developing a 188-target word list for subsequent testing (Dang & Webb, 2016).

Stage Two utilised action research to evaluate incidental vocabulary learning over a 12-week classroom period. This duration allowed sufficient time for multiple action research cycles and meaningful observation of students' vocabulary development. Participants were undergraduate students from the Computer Science Department at the University of Technology, selected because they were enrolled in an English course designed to enhance reading and technical vocabulary related to their discipline. The action research cycle included planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to refine the curriculum weekly (Lewin, 1946). A quasi-experimental design was implemented, using the word list from Stage One to assess vocabulary gains. Students' learning was monitored through learning diaries, classroom observations, and vocabulary tests.

Stage Three focused on qualitative methods, using focus group interviews to explore students' perceptions and experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2015). A total of 11 students voluntarily participated in the interviews, which aimed to understand their attitudes toward incidental vocabulary learning and the strategies they used to handle unfamiliar words.

Data from the three stages were analysed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Corpus data were examined through frequency analysis using WordSmith Tools to identify high-frequency word families and develop a target word list. Quantitative

data from the pre- and post-tests were analysed using SPSS with independent and paired sample t-tests to measure vocabulary gains and effect sizes. Qualitative data from focus group interviews and learning diaries were transcribed, coded, and thematically analysed to identify patterns in students' experiences and strategies. Together, these analyses enhanced the study's overall rigor and comprehensiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Stage One, the corpus analysis of online consumer electronics reviews revealed that the coverage of GSL words was not close to conversational English, and the coverage of AWL words differed from academic texts. Off-list words (words that are not included in the GSL and AWL) had higher coverage than in general texts, indicating the specialised nature of these reviews. Table 1 presents the lexical coverage of the corpus. Based on the criteria of specialised occurrence and frequency (Csomay & Petrović, 2012), a 188-word list was created, which included topic-related words, cohesive devices, sub-technical vocabulary, evaluative terms, and customer concerns. The word list served as the target vocabulary for testing in Stage Two.

Table 1
Lexical coverage of the corpus of online consumer electronics reviews

Word Category	Word Families	Types	Tokens	Coverage (%)
K1 Words (1–1000)	768	1,630	40,521	77.41
K2 Words (1001–2000)	416	671	3,168	6.05
Academic Word List (AWL)	303	493	2,049	3.91
Off-list Words	--	1,825	6,611	12.63
Total	1,487+	4,618	52,349	100.00

Stage Two involved a 12-week classroom experiment using action research. Quantitative results showed significant vocabulary gains in the experimental group engaged in online extensive reading, while the control group did not show similar improvements (Table 2). This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the positive impact of extensive reading on incidental vocabulary learning (Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Teng, 2018; Webb & Chang, 2015). In addition, the study assessed partial word knowledge through three test types, revealing the incremental nature of incidental vocabulary learning (Nation, 2022; Schmitt, 2010). Meaning-translation had the lowest scores, multiple-choice recognition showed the greatest improvement, and word-form recognition scored highest, indicating word knowledge ranges on a continuum, rather than being known or unknown.

Table 2
Summary of vocabulary gains in experimental and control groups

Test Type	Group	N	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Mean Gain	p	Significance
Word-form recognition	Experimental	21	44.05 (10.14)	52.71 (11.42)	+8.66	< .05	Significant
	Control	12	48.00 (12.82)	48.42 (11.31)	+0.42	> .05	Not significant
Meaning-translation	Experimental	21	24.05 (10.44)	31.14 (9.96)	+7.09	< .05	Significant
	Control	12	20.50 (10.33)	20.58 (11.94)	+0.08	> .05	Not significant
Multiple-choice recognition	Experimental	21	42.24 (11.08)	51.43 (11.73)	+9.19	< .05	Significant
	Control	12	45.33 (10.83)	46.50 (10.52)	+1.17	> .05	Not significant

Qualitative data from both the action research cycle in Stage Two and the focus group interviews in Stage Three revealed that students preferred the online reading class over general English classes, finding it more motivating (Yaghi et al., 2019). Students believed frequent word occurrences and classroom tasks enhanced their vocabulary learning (Nation, 2022). However, some felt frustrated by the number of unknown words and confused by words with multiple meanings. Reported strategies for dealing with unknown words included ignoring them, inferring meanings, using online dictionaries, and taking notes. These insights provide a comprehensive understanding of incidental vocabulary learning through online extensive reading.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of incidental vocabulary learning through reading online consumer electronics reviews, enhancing both vocabulary acquisition and reading motivation among Taiwanese undergraduates. By engaging students with authentic online materials, the research offered an innovative and practical alternative to traditional, test-oriented vocabulary instruction. The findings highlight the pedagogical value of integrating incidental and explicit learning approaches to foster deeper lexical knowledge and learner autonomy. Incorporating corpus-based materials and online reading tasks can further enrich English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction. Future studies could include delayed post-tests to measure long-term retention and update word lists to reflect rapidly evolving technological terms, ensuring the continued relevance of this approach in modern English language education in Taiwan.

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Understanding the Complexities of English Learners' Identities in an Intensive English Programme

Sarah Howard^{1,2}

¹Colorado State University Department of English, College of Liberal Arts, 80523 Fort Collins, Colorado, United States of America

²Oregon State University Department of Education, College of Liberal Arts, 97331 Corvallis, Oregon, United States of America

ABSTRACT

Language learner identity has been heavily researched in the field of applied linguistics and there is considerable data that demonstrates the complexities of the development of identity. This study contributes to our collective understanding of the interplay of students' linguistic identities and how immersion programmes abroad can influence that development through the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT). Within this theoretical framework, this naturalistic case study aims to capture some of the attributes and qualities of English Language Learner (ELL) identity. This investigation consisted of three participants at an intensive English programme (IEP) in the United States who were selected via purposeful sampling – a prospective doctoral student from Thailand, a prospective master's student from Uruguay, and a prospective undergraduate student from Kuwait. Data collection consisted of a series of student interviews, researcher observations, and instructor reflections. Through triangulation, the researcher engaged in thematic coding which yielded results that language use of both English and their native language(s) were influenced by the IEP context. Pedagogical implications of translanguaging and creating an inclusive learning environment via cultural competencies are discussed. This study demonstrates how the complex experiences of studying abroad for ELL students yield unique insight into the ever-changing linguistic identities of our students.

Keywords: Acquisition, English, identity, immersion, language

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E-mail address:

Sarah Howard (howasara@oregonstate.edu)

INTRODUCTION

While studying abroad with the intention of language immersion is observed across many global universities, there is a common misconception that students' language development will be inherently supported

by their experience abroad (Bejarano, 2013). The examination of the construct of identity could yield answers to the complexity of language acquisition within the framework of Sociocultural Theory (SCT). To support our international students, it is necessary to take into account the influence of the development of their linguistic profiles on their language learning experience.

RELATED LITERATURE

Vygotsky's SCT emphasised how students relate pedagogical material to their world psychologically and physically through social mediation (Poehner, 2008). Identity and language acquisition relate in that language is an aspect of culture and interrelates to identity as an ever-changing feature (Pre, 2021). They are further related in the way that "every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganising that relationship across time and space" (Norton, 2010, p. 350). In language learning, language identity is affected by the new negotiation for identity and renegotiation of self in the target language.

METHODS

Within the interpretive perspective, this phenomenological case study captures the collective lived experiences of three students within an Intensive English Programme (IEP) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The main source of data was two sets of semi-structured interviews conducted in isolation with each participant to obtain a formative understanding of the participants' perceptions of the development of their own identities. Classroom observations with field notes were collected within each content area (e.g., reading, grammar, listening, etc.). Data underwent qualitative thematic coding to generate categories and patterns across the experiences of the three participants for data analysis (Saldaña, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrated four patterns across the experiences of all three students. First, data showed that the students developed negative perceptions of their native language(s) during their participation in the IEP. Despite this negative sentiment surrounding their native language(s), all the students used their full linguistic repertoire (i.e., all their native language (s) and English as an additional language) in class, either prompted by a classmate, instructor, or external entity. Another dominant theme that emerged was that students demonstrated a need to limit the use of their native language(s) to learn English and that it was not acceptable to use their full linguistic repertoire through translanguaging (Meateus, 2014). For example, one of the participants shared how she believed that her English language development suffered at the cost of using her native language and that she should spend more time (even outside of school) using English.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the experiences of the three students studying abroad at an IEP in America were observed to be influenced by their respective identities. Through the use and context, negotiation of their linguistic self-perceptions, and the role of language identity negotiation in their linguistic profiles, the complex development of identity development was documented, supported by the conceptualisations of identity by Norton (2010). Implications suggest linguistic representation is essential in IEPs to use the students' native language(s) to help with the comprehensibility of content while supporting identity development which can be accomplished through translanguaging. Finally, it may help students overcome negative perceptions of their native languages for educators to nurture students' cultural competency through the study abroad experience (Deardorff, 2006). The consideration of identity within the discussion of language development can support more equitable learning experiences for international students.

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Bilingual Development and Cognitive Effects: Japanese Preschoolers' English Learning Experiences in Singapore

Aya Kutsuki^{1*} and Hideyuki Taura²

¹*Kobe Shoin University, 657-0015 Hyogo, Japan*

²*Ritsumeikan University, 603-8577 Kyoto, Japan*

ABSTRACT

Bilingual development has been linked to advantages in executive functions, but evidence from children with limited bilingual exposure remains scarce. This study examined the relationship between language development and executive functions in early bilingual second-language acquisition. Participants were 122 Japanese-speaking children (67 bilingual, 55 monolingual) attending a Japanese-English bilingual kindergarten in Singapore. Both groups showed comparable Japanese development, indicating smooth first-language growth among bilinguals. The findings further suggest that second-language learning can support first-language development. In cognitive tasks, bilingual children showed greater age-related improvement in reaction time on the Simon task, indicating better monitoring, which was linked to English proficiency and kindergarten experience. These results suggest that even limited second-language exposure in early childhood may relate to executive functions and first-language development, highlighting the need to study how bilingual experience shapes language–cognition links.

Keywords: Executive functions, Japanese-English bilinguals, language development, monitoring, preschoolers

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E-mail addresses:

Aya Kutsuki (ayakutsuki@shoin.ac.jp)

Hideyuki Taura (htaura@fc.ritsumeikai.ac.jp)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Bilingual children are often reported to show advantages in executive functions (EFs), such as inhibitory control and monitoring (Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008). However, reviews have reported inconsistent effects and the extent of this advantage may vary depending on factors such as language proficiency and age (Paap & Greenberg, 2013).

Most studies have focused on native or early bilinguals, often overlooking children with more limited bilingual exposure (Montrul, 2008). This study examines Japanese preschoolers in Singapore, who speak Japanese at home but encounter English mainly in kindergarten, to explore links between bilingual development and EF. Because bilingual outcomes depend on proficiency and exposure (Blom et al., 2014; Luk & Bialystok, 2013), this setting—where Japanese remains dominant in the community (Chang & Lim, 2024)—offers a distinctive context to investigate how bilingual patterns shape cognitive development.

METHODS

The study analysed 159 data points from 122 Japanese preschoolers aged 3–6 years (67 bilingual, 55 monolingual). An LMM (Linear Mixed Model) was used to account for repeated participation. Bilingual children attended a Japanese–English kindergarten in Singapore for approximately 5 hours daily ($M = 27.71$ months, $SD = 10.76$, range = 0.84–46.7), while monolinguals were from Japanese-speaking families in Japan.

Children were tested individually in quiet kindergarten rooms. Inhibitory control was measured with the Simon task: incongruent trials indexed suppression of automatic responses, while overall RT reflected monitoring ability. Language proficiency was assessed using the Picture Vocabulary Test–Revised for Japanese (PVJ) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–Revised for English (PVE).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language Development English Development

The bilingual children’s English acquisition was related to age and kindergarten experience but not Japanese proficiency. These children were learning English independently of their developing Japanese. They were still in the early stages of the development of both languages.

Japanese Language Development

No significant differences in Japanese proficiency (PVJ) were found between bilingual and monolingual children, indicating effective first language development in bilingual children (Figure 1). Interestingly, children with higher English proficiency (PVE) showed faster Japanese vocabulary growth (Figure 2), suggesting different stages of bilingual development and possibly reflecting differential cognitive interplay. While Japanese proficiency may influence cognitive abilities, the results did not reflect this, likely because Japanese is learnt in more consistent, everyday contexts, leading to fewer individual differences.

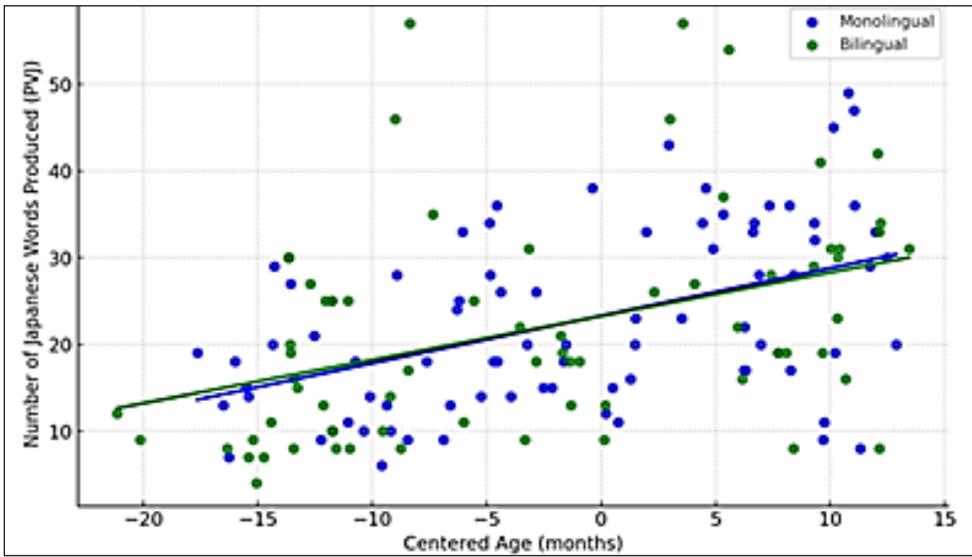


Figure 1. Comparison of Japanese development between bilingual and monolingual

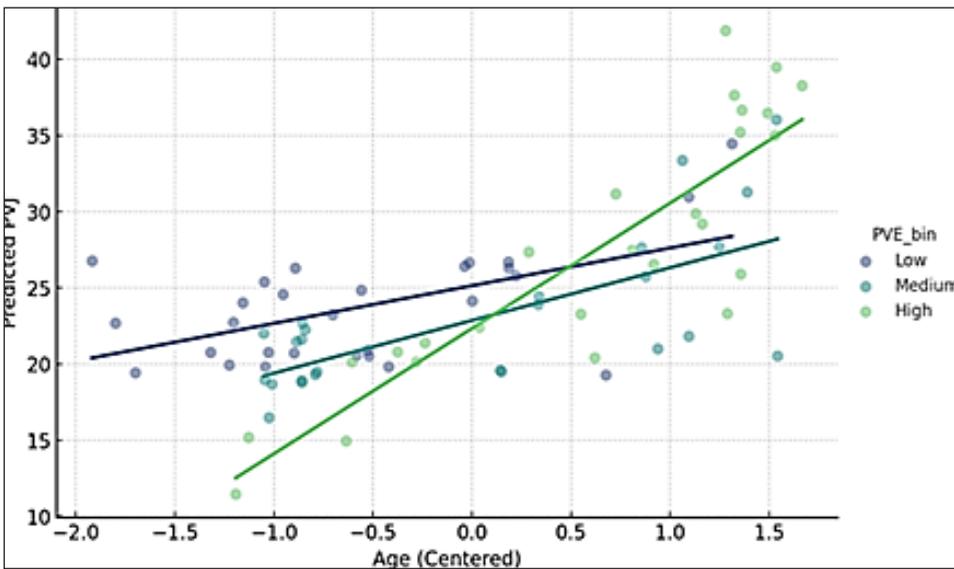


Figure 2. Relationships between English proficiency and Japanese development

Executive Functions Group Comparison

Group Comparison: No significant differences in inhibitory control were observed between the groups, likely because the children did not switch between languages in their daily

environment, and their English proficiency was not very high. However, the bilingual children exhibited faster reaction times (RT), indicating better monitoring. This aligns with Martin-Rhee & Bialystok (2008), who found enhanced monitoring in bilingual children. Our results differ from studies reporting inconsistent bilingual advantages (Lehtonen et al., 2018; Paap & Greenberg, 2013). However, such variability may have been attributed to differences in usage patterns and context (Blom et al., 2014), as well as to our participants' limited exposure and developing English proficiency.

Thus, no group-level advantage in inhibitory control emerged, whereas the monitoring advantage in children with higher English proficiency fits findings that monitoring is the first EF component to improve under limited but intensive L2 exposure (Purić et al., 2017) and accords with meta-analytic evidence that bilingual effects are most robust in monitoring and shifting (Yurtsever et al., 2023).

Analysis within Bilinguals

Children with higher English proficiency and longer bilingual kindergarten experience demonstrated better monitoring. The findings suggest that two years of kindergarten exposure and a three-year-old English vocabulary level are needed to see this effect. This is consistent with Purić et al. (2017), who suggested that some aspects of EFs rather than inhibitory control improve in immersive second language contexts. Taken together, these results may indicate that the degree of bilingual experience—not simply bilingual status—critically shapes which components of executive functions are enhanced.

CONCLUSION

This study examined executive functions in relation to bilingual language development in Japanese preschoolers learning English in a bilingual kindergarten in Singapore. The findings suggest that early second-language learning can influence cognitive development, specifically monitoring but not inhibitory control. The results also indicate an interplay between developing cognitive abilities and bilingual language acquisition, with a certain threshold of language ability and experience required for cognitive effects to emerge.

This highlights the importance of sustained bilingual education in early childhood, fostering cognitive skills and supporting the interdependent development of languages. Importantly, even limited bilingual exposure appears to support executive function.

This has implications not only for expatriate children but also for limited or passive bilinguals, suggesting that even a weaker, less-used language may contribute to the development of executive function.

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Exploring Linguistic Fluidity in the European Communities of Digital Nomads

Novella Tedesco*, Silvia Bernardini, and Cristiana Cervini

Department of Interpreting and Translation, University of Bologna, Forlì Campus, 47121 Forlì, Italy

ABSTRACT

Europe is experiencing a rise in mobility, also caused by the post COVID-19 spread of digital work, virtual collaboration and gig economy. This contribution offers a sociolinguistic perspective on languaging practices within the emerging digital nomad communities around Europe (digital nomads being remote workers who adopt a lifestyle of constant travelling and cultural exploration). As part of wider research on language fluidity, the study features a mixed-methods approach, integrating survey, ethnography, and insights from the recently published NomadLingo corpus of spoken interactions. Digital nomad language background and needs, linguistic attitudes and behaviours are investigated through survey research. Additionally, data collected through ethnography (i.e., self-ethnography journal, observation, and recordings of naturally occurring conversations) offer deeper insights into sociolinguistic systems and negotiation strategies occurring in digital nomad communication. Results show that English as a Lingua Franca is the main communicative means within digital nomad communities. Nevertheless, its use is creative and accompanied by fluid translanguaging practices, involving translanguaging and intercomprehension. While pointing to the need for further research on the topic, these outcomes could be applied in language teaching and planning, to foster a diverse, inclusive ecology of languages.

Keywords: Digital nomadism, English as a Lingua Franca, linguistic fluidity, plurilingualism, translanguaging

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E-mail addresses:

Novella Tedesco (novella.tedesco2@unibo.it)

Silvia Bernardini (silvia.bernardini@unibo.it)

Cristiana Cervini (cristiana.cervini@unibo.it)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

As part of the FLO project¹, this study adopts a sociolinguistic perspective and a linguistic ethnography approach to explore translanguaging practices in digital nomad

¹ FLO, the European Fluid Languages Observatory is a funded doctoral project at the University of Bologna (<https://www.thenomadlinguist.eu/flo/>)

communities, integrating linguistic findings with community life experiences. While previous studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and plurilingualism have mainly examined transcultural communication in classrooms, stabilised migrant communities, and business settings (Cogo, 2022), little is known about how these practices emerge in transient, culturally diverse communities such as those formed by digital nomads. This study addresses that gap by investigating how digital nomads negotiate meaning, construct belonging, and position English within their translanguaging repertoires (Blackledge & Creese, 2017).

RELATED LITERATURE

Digital nomads are professionals who work digitally and adopt a lifestyle of constant travelling and expat living (Reichenberger, 2018). Established across and beyond borders, digital nomad identities are nationally unbounded, and so are their communities of reference. Inspired by the concept of ‘light communities’ (Blommaert & Varis, 2015), we refer to *digital nomad communities* as occasional groups of people interacting online on community networks and gathering around social hubs, co-livings and co-workings in specific locations where they engage in community activities (Thompson, 2019; Woldoff & Lichtfield, 2021). Digital nomads can thus be considered as a privileged group characterised by a high mobility capital (Moret, 2020), but also as embodying the precarious life and work conditions caused by the gig economy (Thompson, 2019). As an evident example of post-globalisation, the emergence of digital nomad communities raises important interrogatives about *linguae francae*, plurilingualism, and transcultural communication.

Transcultural communication is the process of meaning negotiation and co-construction among speakers with diverse cultural backgrounds (Candelier et al., 2010). To explore this process, we refer to two sets of approaches, namely translanguaging theories – challenging the monolingual assumption while construing communicative resources as holistic and adaptive (García & Wei, 2014) – and plurilingualism, which stresses the dynamic interplay of languages and cultures within the same community (Council of Europe, 2020). Sociolinguistic research has increasingly recognised the need to look beyond institutional settings and to examine processes of cultural negotiation in highly mobile contexts like the one here investigated. Recent work highlights enduring tensions between the discourse of openness that surrounds plurilingualism and the structural dominance of English in transnational communication (Cogo, 2022). These contradictions emerge most clearly in interactional contexts where speakers value flexibility and inclusion but continue to orient to hierarchies of competence and legitimacy (Tedesco, in press). The present study contributes to this debate by exploring how such tensions are voiced and managed in contexts where hypermobility and digitalisation create transcultural spaces of interaction.

METHODS

Our study adopts a loosely defined ethnographic approach and features a mix of methodologies: ranging from online survey to a self-ethnography journal, interviews and recording of naturally-occurring interactions. While responses to the survey were gathered online on a voluntary basis, and respondents were then classified into representative or not of the population under study, the ethnographic observations were carried out at the communities based in Madeira (Portugal) and Canary Islands (Spain) between October 2023 and April 2024.² The project methodology has received approval of the Bioethical Committee at the University of Bologna: informed consent and privacy regulations were guaranteed throughout the research process. The present contribution presents a qualitative interpretation of these diverse sets of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION³

Table 1 provides first insights into the linguistic background of 24 survey respondents, all European residents.

Table 1

Respondents' linguistic background

Respondents regarding themselves as bilinguals	18
Median of the languages spoken by respondents	4 (St.Dev. 1.57)
Respondents who received university education in English	9
... using English in their daily life	16
... using English in their daily work-related activities	17
More common languages studied at school	
English	23
German	10
French	8
Italian	8
Spanish	8

Plurilingualism seems to be a characterising feature of digital nomads, whose linguistic repertoires are rich and complex. Romance languages – likely employed in intercomprehension, as observed through ethnography – are common resources within the

² These communities were identified as some of the largest in Europe by the Flatio Report 2023 (<https://www.flatio.com/blog/flatio-launches-its-first-digital-nomad-report-2023>).

³ The survey results on which the present contribution is based are stored in the online repository AmsActa (DOI 10.6092/unibo/amsacta/7722). The NomadLingo corpus containing transcripts of naturally-occurring conversations was deposited in ILC4CLARIN (<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11752/OPEN-1042>).

community. English, however, does not hold a neutral position: its use in speakers’ daily lives is pervasive and transcends demographic factors.

Survey results indicating digital nomads’ desire to improve their communicative competence are confirmed by the numerous language exchange activities and cultural workshops promoted within the communities. Speakers enjoy learning from each other, as shown in the sample reported in Figure 1.

MADEIRA, October 2023 - Data recorded at a nomad’s birthday party	
TRANSCRIPT	Communicative resources and practices
F: they say hm in Brazil they say Recife	ELF
M: Recife hm I... Eu fui...	TRNSLG
F: they say Recife, they uh uh aspira ah	TRNSLG
M: hm depende	PT
F: barreirinha I don’t know how to say it	TRNSLG
M: depende da: da localidade	PT
F: hm hm no la erre però	IT <i>INTCOMP</i>
M: X X X na Europa também existe essa diferenca	PT
M: I can dizer mais forte and I can dizer mais suave	TRNSLG
F: ah ok ok ok	IT
M: Where did you learn Portuguese?	ELF
F: en Brazil in Canada	PT
M: No Canadá?	PT
F: con brasileiros em Canadá	PT

F: Italian nationality; speaks Italian, English, Portuguese and Spanish

M: Portuguese nationality; speaks Portuguese and English

Figure 1. Sample of translingual communication in Madeira (2023)

F is an Italian nomad who had lived in Brazil before moving to Madeira and is checking her knowledge of Portuguese pronunciation with M, a Portuguese teacher who works remotely from Madeira. Besides being an example of language socialisation (Duranti et al., 2012) and metatranslinguistic reflection (Candelier et al., 2010), the extract also shows translanguaging and intercomprehension practices.⁴ The extract thus shows how nomads

⁴ In the figure, ‘ELF’ stands for English as a Lingua Franca (Mauranen & Ranta, 2009), ‘TRSLNG’ for translanguaging, and ‘INTCOMP’ for intercomprehension (Ollivier, 2013).

fluidly navigate linguistic resources to co-construct knowledge, and reveals positive attitudes towards plurilingualism, confirmed by survey results. Indeed, 13 respondents report that they prefer speaking languages other than English. However, most of them regard English as the easiest means for communication. Indeed, it is the most used language in all aspects of life, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

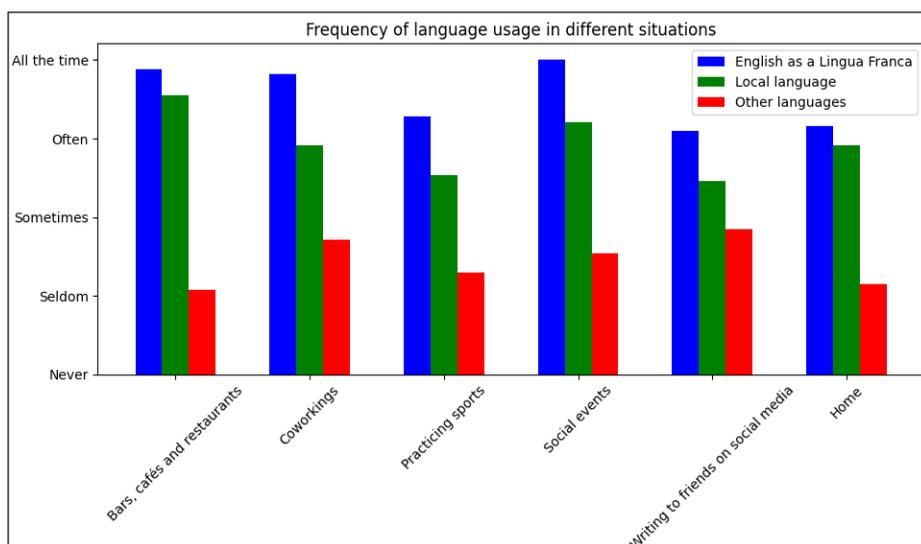


Figure 2. Frequency of language usage across daily situations (professional, social, leisure) among survey participants

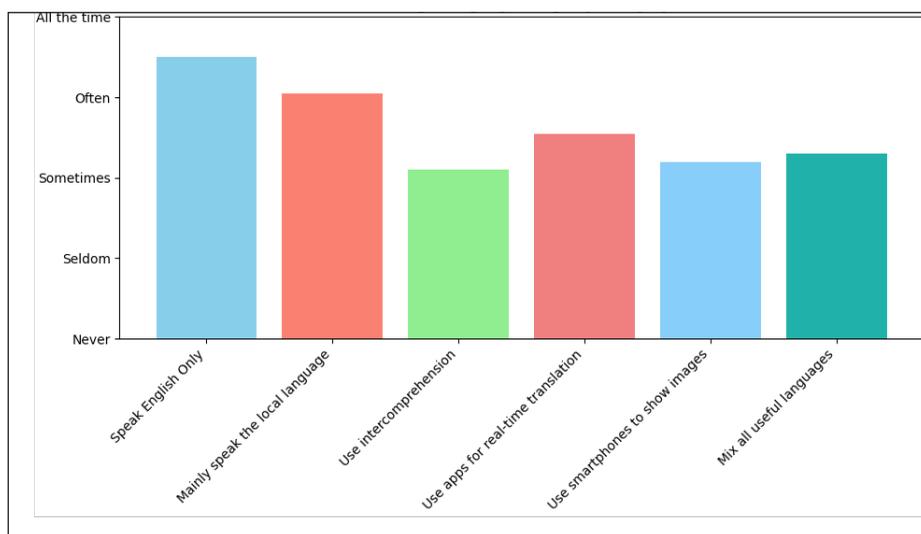


Figure 3. Frequency of communicative practices employed by survey respondents

Notice however that English is enriched by translanguaging practices (like mixing languages and using intercomprehension strategies). Moreover, Figure 2 indicates a trend towards employing resources other than ELF in contexts characterised by greater privacy and informality, which has been noticed also in recorded interactions, where the context (coworking vs. private house vs. public space like a restaurant) seems to affect the amount of translanguaging strategies employed by speakers (Tedesco et al., 2025). Survey data partially mirror such a trend, showing a gap between self-perceived practices (tendency to use mostly English) and positive attitudes towards plurilingualism. Together, these data seem to suggest that monolingual ideologies and educational practices (García & Flores, 2012) still affect – though at an unconscious level – the way speakers deploy their resources.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the European context, our study shows that digital nomads build communities through processes of transcultural communication. Unsurprisingly, given the globalised nature of the phenomenon, English is the most popular means for communication, but the diversity of resources enriching its use challenges monolingual ideologies.

This contribution highlights the need for further sociolinguistic research on digital nomadism to better understand *linguaging* processes and transcultural communication in action, issues that are ever more central for applied linguistics and language policy-making.

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Reading Acquisition and Reflections among South Asian Students at Tertiary Level in Hong Kong

Zhou Tong* and Chan Lam Yim

Centre for Language Education, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

The Hong Kong Education Bureau has implemented various measures to support the integration of South Asian ethnic minorities into local communities. One such measure is providing Chinese language education in primary and secondary schools, as proficiency in Chinese is considered crucial for social mobility. The measure has been implemented for a decade; positive outcomes are to be expected. However, official data about the Chinese proficiency level of South Asian ethnic minorities is limited. With the increase in the number of South Asian students from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri-Lanka successfully entering higher education institutions in Hong Kong, there is a need for language teachers to find out more about the current situation of this learner group and reflect on current curriculum and pedagogy. This study investigates the issues of reading acquisition of South Asian students, aged 18 to 22, and from various academic disciplines, with prior knowledge of traditional Chinese characters and Cantonese, in an English as a medium of instruction Hong Kong university in their Chinese language learning, specifically in intermediate Chinese reading and writing courses. Preliminary results show that the South Asian students acknowledge the advantage of their prior knowledge, that is, understanding of radicals and the full handwriting ability of a traditional characters, while having some difficulties in recognising simplified characters such as characters which are totally different in form. Practitioners can enhance their awareness and understanding of students' learning backgrounds and difficulties to

facilitate their learning. Additionally, relevant learning materials, such as comparisons of traditional and simplified radicals and the basic rules for Chinese character conversion could be supplemented to assist students.

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E-mail addresses:

Zhou Tong (iczhoutong@ust.hk)

Chan Lam Yim (lccrystal@ust.hk)

* Corresponding author

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INTRODUCTION

The proficiency in Chinese is considered a crucial factor for South Asian ethnic minorities' social mobility (Shum et al., 2011). The Hong Kong government has been facilitating the integration of South Asian ethnic minorities into local communities through supporting their Chinese learning for a decade (Education Bureau, 2024), positive outcomes are to be expected. However, official data about the Chinese proficiency level of South Asian ethnic minorities entering higher education institutions is limited (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2023). Notably, there has been a discernible increase in the number of South Asian students successfully entering Hong Kong's universities (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2023), which underscores the need for focused research on this growing learner group. This study aims to strengthen the research area in the context of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). The study focuses on investigating the issues that arise from South Asian students who have prior knowledge of traditional Chinese and Cantonese proficiency in learning simplified Chinese at the tertiary level. One of the areas to be investigated is when South Asian students are promoted to tertiary education at HKUST, where the university requires them to learn simplified Chinese, and whether they encountered any difficulty in the process. Another area is when students with prior knowledge of traditional Chinese learning to read simplified Chinese, different aspects of their learning of the language may be affected respectively.

RELATED LITERATURE

Inadequate Chinese proficiency has become one of the reasons for various challenges faced by South Asian individuals in terms of social mobility in Hong Kong (Li & Leung, 2018), making the issue of Chinese education for South Asian students a focus of concern. Since the 2014/15 academic year, the Hong Kong Education Bureau has continually increased support for South Asian students learning Chinese (Education Bureau, 2024). However, the inadequacy of Chinese proficiency among ethnic minorities remains a major barrier to their further education, employment, and social integration (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2023).

Current research on Chinese learning among South Asian students primarily focuses on the primary and secondary school levels, while relevant studies at the university level are relatively scarce. When it comes to Chinese reading at the primary level, studies indicate that for South Asian students who have acquired basic language skills, reading poses a greater concern (Chou, 2015). At the secondary school level, studies show that the main challenges faced by South Asian secondary school students in learning Chinese are reading and writing (Shi & Ye, 2017).

Leung (2024) focusing on South Asian children studying in kindergartens and primary schools in Hong Kong, the study analyses the challenges they face in learning Chinese

and proposes innovative teaching methods to enhance their Chinese learning effectiveness and expand their opportunities for higher education and career development. Lai and Tai (2022) discussed the learning motivation of South Asian secondary school students in Hong Kong; Wang (2023) focused on how teachers utilised different translanguaging strategies to teach south Asian secondary school students.

As scholars explore Chinese studies at the university level for South Asian students, they find that Chinese characters are a major difficulty in their Chinese learning (Li & Leung, 2018). When students self-identify learning difficulties in written Chinese, writing Chinese is considered the most challenging (Li & Chuk, 2015). Other than the above, research specifically addressing South Asian students in terms of simplified and traditional character conversion and Chinese reading is relatively limited.

METHODS

This research employs an integrated approach that includes semi-structured individual interviews and assessment paper analysis. In fall 2023, only 9 South Asian students enrolled in an intermediate-level Chinese reading and writing course for non-Chinese background students at HKUST and 6 agreed to complete the interview, two from India, three from Nepal, and one from Pakistan. Learners are typically required to have a proficiency level around the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) level 2 before enrolling in this course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the investigation of the challenges faced by students with prior knowledge of traditional Chinese and Cantonese, that is, understanding of radicals and the full handwriting ability of a traditional characters, when learning simplified Chinese, all participants noted that having a foundation in traditional characters is beneficial for comprehending simplified Chinese characters, while they still acknowledged the difficulties encountered during the learning process.

Participants highlighted the similarities between traditional and simplified characters, for example, the way to decode strokes in a character, which helps them learn words more quickly. In Figure 1, showing 们 (simplified) and 們 (traditional) as a set of examples, it shows that Chinese learners need to follow the stroke order from up to down, left to right, hence both simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese characters are transferrable in this way. However, while the semantic radical 亻 shared commonly on both characters, the phonological radicals on the right were different. Despite the differences, the stroke order knowledge was still providing a clue. However, being conditioned in learning traditional characters brings certain challenges as learners need to unlearn what they learn. Much effort is needed to switch their mind from traditional to simplified as some characters are totally different structurally.

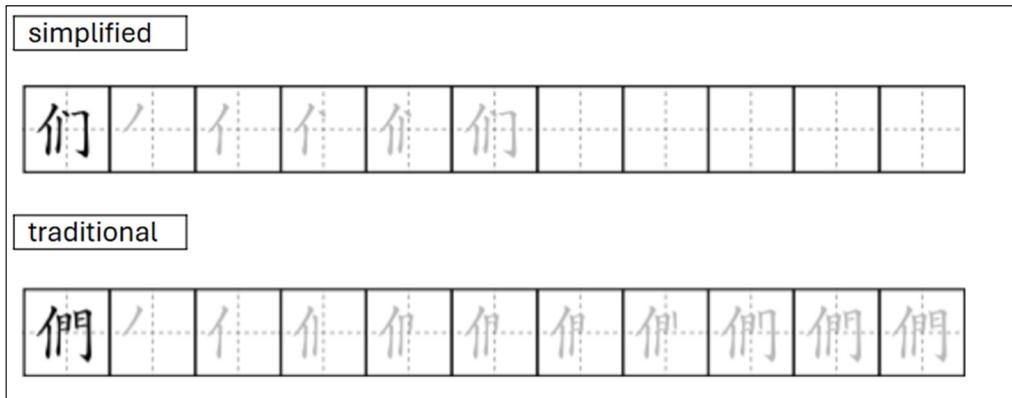


Figure 1. Stroke order of Chinese characters. (An2.net, n.d)

Based on their performance in the course reading assessments and with reference to the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework established by Education Bureau of Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2019), participants showed outstanding reading abilities at the word level, meaning that they could recognise the commonly used words (corresponding to NLR (1.1)1, where NLR denotes the curriculum structure for second language reading ability, with a larger number indicating a higher difficulty level). However, their accuracy rate was lower at the sentence level, and reading comprehension of short passages proved more challenging. An interesting pattern emerged in text comprehension: four out of the six participants performed better in comprehending longer texts (a few paragraphs) than shorter ones (a single paragraph), with both text types corresponding to the same assessed NLR levels [(1.1)3, (2.1)1&2, (3.1)1&2]; one participant's performance remained the same at 100% accuracy. This suggests that learning in context may be crucial, as longer texts likely provide more contextual clues that aid understanding.

In response to the above situation, the curriculum is recommended to include comparisons and conversions between traditional and simplified characters, to teach and learn in context, or a tailored course be developed for this group of learners who have prior knowledge in traditional Chinese and Cantonese. The curriculum should build on their previous primary and secondary Chinese language education by extending the proficiency levels and special learning needs. Achieving this will require concerted efforts from teachers, educational institutions at various levels, and the government.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, participants identified challenges with characters, vocabulary, sentence structure, and overall comprehension of text passages, particularly with individual characters and shorter texts. While traditional Chinese can aid in learning simplified Chinese such as the stroke order is transferable for both versions, it can also cause some confusion as some characters are totally different structurally. Overall, however, the benefits still outweigh the problems for learners, and teachers can make use of the benefits to further enhance their teaching and curriculum planning.

To enhance the learning experience for South Asian students, it is essential to integrate comparisons and conversions between traditional and simplified characters into the curriculum. Tailoring courses to build on their existing knowledge from primary and secondary education will better support their language acquisition. Collaborative efforts among educators, institutions, and the government are crucial to address these challenges and improve Chinese language education for this demographic. The first step is suggested to be taken by course developers and frontline teachers at tertiary institutions to get the wheel moving as resistance may be lesser, and flexibility may be higher compared to primary and secondary schools. Ultimately, supporting South Asian students in mastering Chinese not only benefits their individual growth but also enriches the cultural diversity and inclusivity of Hong Kong society.

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Malaysian University Students' Perspectives towards the Role of Peer Feedback in Developing their English Writing Skills

Vahid Nimehchisalem^{1*} and Vahid Norouzi Larsari²

¹School of Humanities and Fine Arts, University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw, 01-043 Warszawa, Poland

²Department of Preschool and Pre-Primary and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Charles University, 116 39 Prague, Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

A plethora of research is available on the role of peer feedback on English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' writing development. However, we know little about ESL learners' attitude towards peer feedback in the process of writing, particularly in academic settings. The objective of the current study was to explore the attitudes of a group of undergraduate students towards peer feedback in the process of writing their research proposals. In this qualitative study, we used learners' reflections and association tasks to collect the data, analysed using thematic analysis. As our findings indicated, peer feedback was regarded as a form of interactive and collaborative evaluation that could create motivation. An awareness of students' attitudes can help teachers create writing tasks that improve ESL learners' writing skills more effectively.

Keywords: English as a second language (ESL) writing, attitudes, peer feedback, English for academic purposes (EAP)

INTRODUCTION

In the English as a second language (ESL) context of Malaysia, learning and teaching writing remains challenging, with classes often being teacher-centred, form-focused, and exam-oriented (Marzaini et al., 2024). While peer feedback is a potential solution, its effectiveness varies, and research suggests that students may struggle to provide constructive criticism (Ferris &

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E-mail addresses:

Vahid Nimehchisalem (v.nimehchisalem@vizja.pl / nimechie@gmail.com)

Vahid Norouzi Larsari (vahid.norouzi@campus.globalnxt.edu.my / vahid.larsari@gmail.com)

* Corresponding author

Hedgecock, 2005) or hesitate to challenge peers due to cultural factors (Carson & Nelson, 1996).

Using association tasks and reflections, this qualitative study advances the field by addressing these gaps and exploring how university students perceive peer feedback in the Malaysian context. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on feedback quality, this research highlights students' emotional and cognitive responses, shedding light on how training and structured implementation can enhance the peer feedback process. Understanding these dimensions provides valuable insights for developing more effective collaborative writing practices in ESL classrooms.

According to the literature, peer feedback has a multi-faceted nature. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) reported that peers who provide feedback develop more than those who receive feedback. According to Xuan et al. (2024), peer feedback significantly affects students' writing development by increasing their motivation. Novakovich (2016) classifies peer feedback in terms of its quality, as follows:

1. naïve feedback, in which the peer encourages the feedback receiver (e.g., *I enjoyed reading your writing*)
2. editing, in which the peer edits the writing (e.g., *Correct this part*)
3. critical feedback, in which peers explain how the feedback receiver's writing affected them (e.g., *Your essay shifted my perspective about this topic*)
4. directive feedback, in which the peer instructs the feedback receiver to revise something (e.g., *You could give an example here to elaborate on your argument*)

The current study aims to investigate ESL learners' perceptions of peer feedback in a report writing course at a public Malaysian university.

METHODS

Qualitative methods were followed for data collection and analysis. Association tasks and reflections were used for collecting the data from ten sophomore students majoring in Applied Linguistics at a public university in Malaysia while they were completing a collaborative writing task (Appendix 1). In the association task, the students listed the first five ideas that would cross their mind when thinking about the word 'peer feedback'. We collected the reflections from the students' portfolios that they completed while doing the collaborative writing task. Thematic analysis method was used for analysing the data. Pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the results in Table 1 indicate, for the students in the current study, peer feedback is commonly associated with 'evaluation' ($f=20$), 'interaction' ($f=14$), 'direction' ($f=10$), and

'motivation' ($f=4$). It is interesting to see traces of the categories of feedback, as proposed by Novakovich's (2016).

Table 1
Results of analysis of association task

Repeating ideas	Emerging themes	Frequency (f)
Counter opinion, Constructive criticism, Critical response, Criticism, Critique, Evaluation, Impressions, Judgement, Judge, Rate, Rating, Reaction, Reflection, Review, Thinking	Evaluation	20
Communication, Event, Exchange, Forms, Opinion, Responds, Response, Sequences, Speak, Talk, Thoughts, Two-way communication	Interaction	14
Adjustment, Change, Empowering, Helpful, Improve, Improvement, Suggestions	Direction	10
Can either be positive or negative, Honest, Positivity, Stress	(De)motivation	4

We also analysed students' reflections, from which a number of themes emerged. Most notably, our participants turned out to view peer feedback as a component of a learning process which involves different types of feedback, recursively shifting from self-feedback to AI/machine feedback, peer feedback, and teacher feedback. We were surprised to find that some of the participants had never experienced peer feedback before. As one of the participants related, "*I have never applied peer feedback in my writing process so learning it this semester proved to be beneficial for the future,*" [Athirah]. Our data also indicated the significance of training students to provide and receive peer feedback effectively:

When it comes to criticism, I had some bad experiences before. However, with the way our lecturer has taught us to give feedback, I welcomed every critique with open arms. The feedback did not diminish my confidence, but nurtured it, enabling our group to fix our mistakes to produce a better essay. [Diana]

In the feedback literature, researchers like Kaya and Yaprak (2020) have already highlighted the key role of training. According to Bailey and Cassidy (2019), peer feedback will not be effective unless students receive training, clear instructions and examples, and frequent practice, and unless they constantly reflect on the feedback process.

The participants in our study also observed peer feedback to have created a supporting and constructive learning environment. As some of them stated, they intended to maintain using peer feedback as an effective learning strategy. For example, Adam reflected, "*I finally realised that the feedback from my peers proved to be helpful for me when doing*

this assignment and not only for this particular assignment but also for future assignments as well.” As it is evident from these findings, peer feedback can play a significant role in developing students’ writing ability.

The findings suggest that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping students’ perceptions of peer feedback. In collectivist cultures like Malaysia, the emphasis on maintaining harmony can influence the nature of feedback provided. Previous research (Carson & Nelson, 1996) has shown that students from homogeneous cultural backgrounds may avoid direct criticism to preserve group cohesion. This aligns with our participants’ reflections, where they valued constructive and supportive feedback over overly critical comments. Such cultural tendencies highlight the need for structured peer feedback training that encourages balanced critique while respecting interpersonal dynamics. Addressing these cultural influences in ESL/EFL settings can enhance the effectiveness of peer feedback, ensuring that students engage in meaningful revision rather than offering surface-level agreement.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, we investigated students’ perceptions towards peer feedback in the process of writing. The findings showed that students generally had positive perceptions of peer feedback. Additionally, the study highlighted that effective peer feedback requires proper training. Future research could investigate the long-term impact of peer feedback training on writing development and student engagement through longitudinal studies. Expanding the study to diverse ESL contexts would also provide deeper insights into the broader applicability of peer feedback in different educational settings.

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APPENDIX

Collaborative Writing of an Argumentative Essay (30%)

Objective

The goal of this assignment is to provide a hands-on opportunity for the students to experience the recursive process of writing collaboratively before they publish it online.

Important notes

- This assignment consists of three tasks: 1) Essay writing task (20 Marks), 2) Creating a video - read the essay with special effect on your audience (5 Marks) and 3) Portfolio (5 Marks).
- This assignment is done in groups of three.
- At each stage, share your thought, plans, write with your group members and receive feedback from peers and the instructor.
- If you wish to use visual material, remember you will need permission to publish them; therefore, you are advised to use your original photos and videos to avoid violating copyright rules.

Instructions

Task 1 (Group work - 20 Marks)

- Write a 600 to 650-word argumentative essay about a topic of your choice.

Task 2 (Group work - 5 Marks)

- Make a video no more than 5 minutes in which you read your essay to your audience.
- You may use music, songs, photographs, but please consider their copyrights to avoid copyright infringement.

Task 3 (Individual work - 5 Marks)

- Keep a portfolio. In your portfolio,
- report your challenges and solutions
- describe the process of development of your essay in a group (what you found useful/effective, problems or difficulties that you encountered, strategies that you used to overcome them)
- describe the experience of giving and receiving feedback from your peers and from me (What did you gain from the feedback? What did you find helpful or not helpful for you?)

- write a self-evaluation in 200-300 words to explain how you feel about online writing experience (the use of books, google Doc/wikispaces/Facebook, etc.) and how it helped or fail to help you develop as a learner and a writer. How does writing in an online platform affect your learning process? How would you want the course to be taught differently?)
- add photos, mind maps, etc. to vividly illustrate the process of the development of your work.

Submission notes

- Submit Task 1, the 600 to 650-word argumentative essay, via Putrablast. The group leader submits for the whole group to avoid duplicates. Compile the different drafts of your writing (no word limit) together with the final argumentative essay.
- Submit Task 2, the 5-minute video, by uploading it on Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3473681852887493>).
- Submit Task 3, the portfolio, INDIVIDUALLY via Putrablast.
- The deadline to submit the assignments is the end of Week 13.
- In Week 14, all the groups from both groups showcase their videos at The Fourth BBI3421 Academy Awards. Winners are announced and receive certificates.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENT 1

Below is the comprehensive guideline for you to carry out the group writing assignment.

A. FILL IN THE 'GROUP INFO' DOCUMENT AND CREATE YOUR FOLDER

- I have created a Google Docs folder. Add your information to the Google doc there and then create a folder for your group; you're required to organise the content of your folder according to the list below:
 1. Stage 1: Choosing a topic (Week 3)
 2. Stage 2: Researching and resourcing (Week 4)
 3. Stage 3: Brainstorming and outlining (Week 5)
 4. Stage 4: 1st draft (Week 6)
 5. Stage 5: 1st draft Cont'd (Week 7)
 6. 1st Peer review and teacher feedback (Week 9)
 7. Stage 6: 2nd draft (Week 10)
 8. 2nd Peer review and teacher feedback (Week 11)
 9. Stage 7: Final editing and proofreading (Week 12)
 10. Showcasing (Week 13)

B. BEGIN YOUR WEEKLY DISCUSSION AND COMPLETE EACH STAGE BY THE END OF EVERY WEEK

- a. Use your names during your discussions so that I can see who exactly said and contributed what. All you need to do is to ‘suggest’ and type your discussions on the documents on our drive.
- b. While revising and editing your drafts, also keep your document on ‘suggest’ mode. Then I will know what was exactly revised, deleted, or added.

C. COMPILE WEEKLY FILES IN A FOLDER

- Save your discussions of each stage at the end of each week.

D. DO NOT PRESS “Resolve” button at the chats.

- This will delete the whole discussion.

E. The Analytic Scale of Argumentative Writing (Nimehchisalem et al., 2021) will be used to rate your essays.

Effects of Reading Material Length on EFL Learners' Reading Speed: Analysing Online Reading Time Data

Natsumi Tanaka

Nihon University, 101-8360 Tokyo, Japan

ABSTRACT

Speed-reading activities have been used in English classes in order to improve learners' reading fluency. In speed-reading activities, learners read easy passages quickly, answer simple comprehension questions, and record their reading time. Reading speed increases as they repeat the procedure. To examine the effects of passage length, the previous study compared EFL learners' reading speed for short passages (200 words) with longer passages (300 words), both of which were composed of familiar, high-frequency words. Results showed that learners read the 300-word passages faster than 200-word passages. This finding was unexpected, as a meta-analysis on speed reading indicated that the length of reading materials had no effect on reading speed. In order to re-examine these findings, this study investigates the effects of reading material length on Japanese EFL learners' reading speed. This study used 200-word passages for the short-passage condition, and 400-word passages for the long-passage condition. A total of 37 intermediate-level Japanese university students participated, and reading time data of 26 were analysed. All participants read both shorter and longer passages, and their reading speeds under the two conditions were compared using a paired *t*-test. The results showed that learners read longer passages significantly faster than shorter ones. These findings confirm the effects of passage length on reading speed when texts are easy. Based on these results, the pedagogical implications for speed-reading activities were discussed.

Keywords: EFL reading, material length, online reading time, reading fluency, speed reading

INTRODUCTION

Reading fluency is commonly conceptualised as a construct that includes reading comprehension, reading speed, and reading automaticity. To improve learners' reading fluency, speed-reading activities have been employed. Typically, learners read short, easy passages containing familiar words.

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E-mail address:

Natsumi Tanaka (tanaka.natsumi@nihon-u.ac.jp)

They record their reading time and calculate their reading speed (the number of words that a reader read in a minute; words per minute, wpm).

However, reading speed is not determined by a single factor. Previous research has shown that it is influenced by a range of variables, such as text readability, topic familiarity, readers' level of reading proficiency, and reading purpose (Carver, 1992; Nation & Macalister, 2020). These factors interact in complex ways, making it difficult to attribute differences in reading speed to any one source. Given this complexity, it is essential to examine how specific textual characteristics affect learners' reading speed in order to design and evaluate effective speed-reading materials.

Therefore, the present study focuses on text length as a key variable and investigates how differences in text length influence the reading speed of EFL learners.

RELATED LITERATURE

While the effect of text length on reading comprehension has been extensively examined, its impact on reading speed has received relatively limited attention. Zainurrahman et al. (2024), for example, suggested that reading time may be influenced more by text readability level than by text length per se, even reporting cases in which shorter texts required more time to read than longer ones.

Tanaka (2021), which used 200-word and 300-word passages with comparable readability levels, found that reading speed was faster for the 300-word texts. This finding contrasts with the meta-analysis by Brysbaert (2019), which reported no effect of text length on reading speed based on studies involving both L1 and EFL readers.

To investigate this conflict, this study compared EFL learners' reading speed between the short and long reading passage to examine the effect of reading material length on reading speed. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: Does the length of reading passages affect EFL learners' reading speed?

METHODS

Participants

A total of 37 Japanese EFL university students (intermediate proficiency level) participated in this study. Participants were recruited from an English course at a Japanese university, where the study was conducted as part of regular classroom activities. They were informed that their reading data might be used for research purposes, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The reading time data of 11 students were excluded, because they failed to complete all tasks. The remaining data sets of 26 students were used for the analysis.

Materials

The study included a short-passage condition (200 words) and a long-passage condition (400 words). To ensure comparability between conditions, the short passages were created by summarising the original 400-word passages while preserving the main content and maintaining similar readability levels. Five 400-word passages from *New Zealand Speed Readings for ESL Learners 1000 Word List* (Millet, 2017) were chosen, because the texts are specifically designed for ESL learners, with controlled vocabulary frequency and passage length to ensure high readability. For the short-passage condition, two passages were summarised to 200 words by the researcher and subsequently proofread by native English speakers. The readability of passages was almost the same between short and long passages. One of the readability indices, the Flesch–Kincade Grade Level (FKGL), range from 5.76–7.10. The word difficulty level (according to the CEFR) is between A1.3–A2.2 based on the CVLA (CEFR-based Vocabulary Level Analyser; Uchida & Negishi, 2021).

Procedure

After practicing how to read passages online, participants read two short passages (200 words) followed by two long passages (400 words) and answered five comprehension questions using their devices, following the procedure described in Tanaka (2021). The reading time for each passage and the participants' answers to the comprehension questions were recorded.

Analysis

Certain reading time data were excluded from the analysis. Specifically, reading times faster than 300 wpm were excluded, as this suggested participants likely skipped parts of the passage. Additionally, data with less than 40% accuracy (i.e., fewer than two out of five correct answers) on the comprehension questions were also excluded, as participants likely did not understand the passage.

The average reading speed was calculated across the two passages. A paired *t*-test was conducted to compare reading speed (wpm) under the short- and long-passage conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The paired *t*-test for reading speed revealed a significant difference between the two length conditions, $t(25) = -5.38$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -1.06$. The results indicated that learners read the long passage (400 words) faster than the short passage (200 words), as shown in Table 1. Following Tanaka (2021), which used 300-word passages as the longer condition, faster reading speed was also observed with 400-word passages. This result is partly consistent with Zainurrahman et al. (2024), who reported that reading speed was

more strongly influenced by text readability than by length itself. The present study extends their findings by demonstrating that, when readability is comparable, text length may still affect reading speed.

In a typical passage, sentences become more complex and harder to understand as they get longer. However, the experimental materials were intentionally developed so that the readability was equivalent between two length conditions. Table 1 also shows the number of correct responses to the comprehension questions. While no statistical analysis was performed, comprehension appeared to remain similar across conditions. In the long-passage condition, participants may have skipped over detailed information while maintaining a general understanding of the text.

Table 1
Results of reading speed and number of correct answers (N = 26)

	Reading Speed (wpm)		Number of Correct Answers (5-point scale)	
	M (SD)	95%CI	M (SD)	95%CI
Short	107.45 (36.69)	[92.63, 122.27]	3.61 (1.29)	[3.18, 4.04]
Long	174.31 (64.48)	[148.26, 200.35]	3.66 (1.09)	[3.30, 4.03]

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study suggest that text length may influence EFL learners' reading speed when text readability is carefully controlled. Although the result was unexpected in that longer passages were read faster than shorter ones, the present results indicate that length effects may emerge under specific conditions, particularly in EFL contexts.

Pedagogical Implication

When learners use a speed-reading material including passages of various lengths, they should notice that the results that the learners can read longer passages faster does not necessarily mean they improve their own reading speed. Learners should confirm their reading speed achievement using passages of some different types of length.

Limitation

As the presentation order was the same (i.e., short to long-passage conditions) and the comprehension questions were relatively easy, the participants might be demotivated to keep reading longer passages carefully. It should be noted that 400 words may still be considered relatively short as a long-passage condition. Therefore, future research should examine longer passages, as well as texts with more complex logical structures that are less amenable to skimming.

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Design and Development of Items for Assessing Intercultural Competence in East Asian Contexts

Weejeong Jeong^{1*}, Xiaoying Liles¹, and Fengming Liu²

¹Indiana University Bloomington-Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Faculty, 47405 Bloomington, United States of America

²Beijing University of Chemical Technology- School of International Education, Faculty, 100029 Beijing, China

ABSTRACT

This ongoing pilot study aims to establish and verify cultural conventional expressions as well as cultural attitudes and behaviours survey items in the East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) context. The participants in this study are 91 Chinese, 70 Japanese, and 70 Korean native speakers attending a college in each country. Survey questionnaire of intercultural development was developed based on the intercultural competence (IC) model. It included a 33-item self-assessment instrument with a five-point Likert scale for the cultural attitude and behaviour, as well as a 38-item aural-oral discourse completion task (DCT) on conventional expressions for the linguistic attributes section. The 71 items have been validated by Chinese native speakers through descriptive statistics and the thematic analysis of responses. The preliminary results from the data provide promising prospects that imply the verification of the 71 items in the Japanese and Korean contexts. This study contributes to the field of IC in foreign language classrooms, informing both future studies and instructional practices.

Keywords: Culture, conventional expressions, East Asian languages, intercultural competence, test development

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E-mail addresses:

Weejeong Jeong (weejeong@iu.edu)

Xiaoying Liles (dingxiao@iu.edu)

Fengming Liu (2025500058@buct.edu.cn)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

The importance of intercultural competence (IC) in foreign language classrooms (Chapelle, 2016) has increased aligning with the fast-paced transforming society due to the development of science, technology, and globalisation (Stewart, 2007). Thus, the 21st century language instructors are expected to play a role as a facilitator by creating an open atmosphere for language

learners to explore and compare between the native culture and the target language culture. The positive relationship between English language proficiency and IC focusing on communication were found among Chinese people (Feng, et al., 2024; Wang, et al., 2025). Lee and Song (2019) explored that American students learning East Asian languages significantly improved their IC through study abroad and telecollaboration. However, little research has investigated the effects of East Asian language learners' proficiency on IC for linguistic attributes and cultural attitudes and behaviours. Given that, the purpose of this study is to develop valid survey items for conventional expressions and cultural attitudes and behaviours in the East Asian (China, Japan, and Korea) context, to assess L2 East Asian language learners' IC. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How can conventional expressions and cultural attitude and behaviour items be constructed in the East Asian context?
2. How can the validity of these items be verified?

RELATED LITERATURE

Intercultural competence (IC) can be defined as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people in cultural situations (Deardorff, 2009; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). Deardorff (2009) proposed the process model of IC, which demonstrates continual process of IC development from personal level to interpersonal level through intercultural interaction.

Successful intercultural interaction entails the acquisition of conventional expressions used in a target country. Conventional expressions are a type of formulaic sequences used as pragmalinguistic resources to convey illocutionary force (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009). Additionally, cultural attitudes and behaviours should not be overlooked to view learners' knowledge and comprehension (Hammer et al., 2003).

METHODS

For the section of cultural attitude and behaviour, ten native Chinese college students in China, aged 19 to 23, have participated in the study and 81 students participated for the section of linguistic attributes so far.

Items for the cultural attitudes and behaviours on sociocultural norms shared by China, Japan, and Korea were developed using a format of the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al., 2003). The questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) consists of 33 items, with 11 items dedicated to each of three categories: daily life, academic life, and the work environment.

For the section of linguistic attributes, a timed aural-oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT) that includes 38 real-life scenarios drawn from daily life, academic settings, and

professional environments was developed to elicit conventional expressions commonly used by Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans in the initiating and responding scenario format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preliminary results of the section of cultural attitude and behaviour indicate that the items functioned well for the Chinese section. For the 21 agreement items, the average score was 3.99 out of 5 ($SD = 0.84$), while the average score for the 12 disagreement items was 2.07 out of 5 ($SD = 0.83$). Specifically, items of daily life exhibit a high degree of uniformity, indicating that daily life is more universally shared due to common societal norms, followed by items of academic life. Items of work environment show lowest homogeneity, implying that there is more variation in how people experience at work. Preliminary data results suggest that the items effectively elicited consensus responses from L1 Chinese speakers. This is evidenced by the marked differences in ratings between agreement and disagreement items across all three categories.

Preliminary results of the section of linguistic attributes have shown that 33 conventional expressions were identified from 32 scenarios, with one scenario eliciting two distinct expressions. The production rates of these expressions ranged from 50.63% to 92.41%, with an average of 62.83%. Among these, three expressions achieved production rates of 80% or higher, while four expressions fell within the 70% to 80% range. 13 expressions were observed to occur between 60% and 70%, and another 13 were identified between 50% and 60% of the time. This variation indicates that some expressions are more commonly used in specific scenarios while others may be less frequent. Two examples serve to illustrate the types of scenarios and the conventional expressions elicited. In one initiating scenario, participants were asked to propose a toast at a colleague's wedding banquet. In this scenario, over 90% of Chinese speakers used the conventional expression (祝) (你们) {百年好合/新婚快乐} (Wishing you a hundred years of happiness together or Happy marriage). In a responding scenario, participants were asked to clarify the meaning of the term 目标语 (target language) in a conversation with a classmate. Over 60% of participants responded with the conventional expression 目标语是 {什么/啥} 意思? (What does "target language" mean?).

According to the preliminary results, the items measuring cultural attitudes and behaviours demonstrated reliably in the Chinese section. Additionally, the items developed based on typical conventional expressions used by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean speakers showed cultural relevance and functional clarity in the Chinese section, suggesting that promising potential for similar effectiveness in the Japanese and Korean sections.

CONCLUSION

This study is to verify cultural attitudes and behaviours survey items and conventional expressions in the East Asian context to assess L2 learners' IC. The pilot scores of cultural attitudes and behaviours survey demonstrate that these items are effective in capturing L1 Chinese speakers' sociocultural norms. The timed aural-oral DCT also proves to effectively elicit conventional expressions from L1 Chinese speakers. The preliminary results suggest that assessing similar skills in L1 Japanese and Korean speakers can be extended to evaluate IC in L2 learners of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean as three countries share many cultural aspects. The results also indicate that L1 speakers' responses can serve as a baseline data for examining L2 learners' perception of the norms of IC.

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Pedagogical Strategies for Japanese Students with English Learning Difficulties and the Transformation of Student Perceptions

Akio Abe^{1*} and Noboru Kaneshige²

¹*Oomoto Elementary School, Elementary School Teacher, 700-0925 Okayama, Japan*

²*Oosaka Shoin Women's University, Faculty of Childhood Education, Professor, 577-8550 Osaka, Japan*

ABSTRACT

Since 2020, Japanese elementary schools have implemented English education from third grade. This study addresses students with learning difficulties who have negative perceptions of English, using practical measures such as ICT-based learning, integrated subjects, and student reflection, reducing negative perceptions from 14.62% to 11.5%. The study concludes that flexible and diverse teaching strategies, including audio learning, are essential to alleviate negative perceptions and promote positive English learning experiences.

Keywords: Classroom-based practical report, transformation of student perceptions, students with learning difficulties

INTRODUCTION

In Japanese elementary schools, English education has been implemented starting from the third grade since 2020. Despite efforts to promote English learning, an increasing number of students express that they do not enjoy studying English, presumably because of curriculum overload and evaluation of their performance (Abe & Kaneshige, 2023b). To tackle this challenge and encourage a positive approach to learning, this study aimed to conduct practical research (Abe & Kaneshige, 2023ab).

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E-mail addresses:

Akio Abe (akireiwa2019@gmail.com)

Noboru Kaneshige (kaneshige.noboru@osaka-shoin.ac.jp)

* Corresponding author

RESEARCH PROCESS

This paper first outlines the structure of English education in Japanese elementary

schools and then introduces methods to encourage active learning among 40 students. In Japanese public schools, English education was expanded, twice-weekly 45-minute classes for fifth and sixth graders. Given its novelty, instructional methods, evaluation techniques, and teacher training are continually being improved. Japanese public schools typically have large classes, up to 40 students, sometimes 45 including special needs students. One teacher is often in charge of such classes, which may be a psychological and practical burden.

In their 2023 study, Abe and Kaneshige (2023a) examined classroom implementations with around 40 students, incorporating regular student reflections. A four-point Likert survey revealed that many students found English “difficult” or “not enjoyable.” These students showed passivity in open-ended reflections, highlighting classroom challenges. To support these students, the study used individual interactions, proficiency assessments, checklists (Hayashida et al., 2022), and interviews to identify and address learning difficulties, informing instructional strategies (Abe & Kaneshige, 2023b).

METHODS

Participants

The study involved 150 sixth-grade students whom the first author taught in the 2023 academic year. Our (Abe & Kaneshige, 2023a) affective survey was used to identify students who had negative perceptions of English. In the survey, students answered whether they liked English or enjoyed English classes. In a four-point Likert scale, we categorised students as “having negative perceptions of English” when they answered negatively to both liking and enjoyment. Additionally, the checklist proposed by Hayashida et al. (2022) was used to identify children who needed individual or special support.

As a result, of 19 students with negative perceptions of English, 10 received additional support (10 targeted students and 9 non-targeted students). Some students who were not selected for individual support showed reluctance to actively participate despite performing well, from the author’s impression.

Implementation Period and Process

The implementation period spanned from July 2023 to March 2024, covering the academic year until the graduation of the sixth graders. The general flow of the implementation and the emphasised teaching methods each month, to support students with negative perceptions of English, are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Table 1
The general flow of practice

Year	Month	Flow
2023	July	Initial affective survey (four-point Likert scale proposed by Abe & Kaneshige, 2023b) on foreign language perception
	August	Selection of students with negative perceptions (10 students) Planning of measures using Hayashida et al.'s (2022) checklist
	September-February	Introduction of strategies to promote metacognition and reduce anxiety through student reflection and individual interactions
2024	March	Second affective survey on foreign language attitudes (the same structure of the survey as in July)

Table 2
Monthly emphasised teaching methods to support students with negative perceptions

Year	Month	Topics
2023	September	Audio learning: Individual learning using audio resources (chants and basic expressions) to address difficulties with pronunciation
	October-November	Integration with other subjects: Learning content linked to other subjects (science and home economics) to enhance learning motivation
2024	February	Video exchanges: Exchange videos in English with students from the prospective middle school for authentic activities

Note. Throughout the entire practice, individual interactions and reflections were also implemented to help students positively perceive their learning and reduce anxiety (Metacognitive Skills Enhancement)

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF CHANGES

Pre-and Post-survey on Foreign Language Attitudes

The pre- and post-surveys revealed a decrease in students with negative perceptions of foreign languages from 19 out of 130 (14.62%) to 13 out of 113 (11.5%). This indicates an overall improvement in students' attitudes towards English learning. The following sections provide a qualitative analysis of these changes.

Changes Among Targeted Students

Among the 10 students targeted using the checklist, two showed a reduction in negative perceptions, three maintained their negative perceptions, and five did not respond to the post-survey. Improved students gained confidence by not relying on phonetic readings in Japanese and mastering basic expressions and chants. Those who maintained negative perceptions enjoyed science-related activities but struggled to develop an interest in English. The five non-respondents were affected by external factors like illness and needed more individualised attention, underscoring the necessity for ongoing, personalised support.

Although the number of children whose negative perception improved was limited, some students changed their perceptions. The approach of engaging students individually and attracting them with not only English but also other subject contents would be worth future studies.

Changes Among Non-Targeted Students

At the first survey in July, nine students fell into this category. Positively, seven students of those students reported improved perceptions post-survey, indicating that interventions also benefited others. Universal design and supportive classroom environments contributed to this positive change according to the second affective survey in March.

Conversely, six students developed negative perceptions post-survey, with three not responding initially. Exam pressure and evaluation may contribute to their anxiety. One class showed declining motivation, despite increased practice and ICT use. However, video exchanges with middle school students boosted engagement, suggesting that reducing evaluation anxiety and offering purposeful activities can enhance motivation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this practical research, three main approaches—ICT utilisation, Integration with Other Subjects, and Metacognitive Skills Enhancement—were used throughout the year to address students' negative perceptions of English. Although the research design did not allow for identifying which approach was the most effective, the number of students with negative perceptions decreased.

A key factor in students' dislike for English was the perception of not understanding the language. Confidence-building measures, such as reading without phonetic aids, are needed before encouraging speaking or writing. This study found that students who solidified basic expressions and gained confidence overcame negative perceptions. Special support checklists effectively influenced even non-targeted students, though large classes limit individualised interactions, emphasising the need for flexible teaching strategies.

Addressing new negative perceptions is crucial as learning complexity increases. Reducing evaluation anxiety, offering purposeful activities, and fostering group work can alleviate these perceptions. Various measures can enrich large classrooms, with non-evaluative activities also reducing anxiety. Given the time constraints in educational contexts like Japan, flexible approaches and diverse strategies tailored to students' needs are essential.

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Investigation of Alphabet Pronunciation among Japanese Elementary School Children Using Ultrasound Analysis

Akio Abe^{1*}, Noriko Yamane², and Xiaofeng Tan²

¹*Oomoto Elementary School, Elementary School Teacher, 700-0925 Okayama, Japan*

²*Hiroshima University, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 739-8521 Hiroshima, Japan*

ABSTRACT

The 2017 revisions to Japan's curriculum introduced early English education in elementary schools. However, phonetic research on Japanese children's English pronunciation is limited. Research findings have indicated low pronunciation accuracy for R, V, Z, P, and L. Reportedly, age and learning experience impact the acquisition of L and R. This study uses ultrasound images to examine the pronunciation of R and L by Japanese children, aiming to improve teaching methods by understanding the pronunciation challenges and individual differences.

Keywords: Elementary school children, Japanese speakers of English, ultrasound analysis, pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

In Japan's public education system, there is a trend of introducing English education at earlier stages (MEXT, 2017), similar to other countries where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught. One of the expectations of lowering the age is that younger learners, considering their developmental stage, are more perceptive to phonetic aspects. However, within the context of second language acquisition, the actual state of

English pronunciation among children in an EFL environment remains unclear. This study aims to investigate the English pronunciation of Japanese elementary school children using ultrasound to clarify their articulation of English sounds.

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E-mail addresses:

Akio Abe (akireiwa2019@gmail.com)

Noriko Yamane (yamanen@hiroshima-u.ac.jp)

Xiaofeng Tan (d210781@hiroshima-u.ac.jp)

* Corresponding author

LITERATURE

In Japanese public schools, English education was expanded in 2020. Currently,

from the 3rd grade, there is a 45-minute foreign language activity class once a week, and from the 5th grade, foreign language is taught as a subject twice a week. Although initially introduced as part of international understanding, there is now an increasing expectation for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. As a new subject, ongoing efforts are being made to refine teaching methods, evaluation techniques, and teacher education, all of which consider the developmental stages of children (MEXT, 2017).

Despite expectations for the improvement of phonetic skills in elementary school English education, little has been discussed on the assessment of students' pronunciation skills (Abe, 2018). Joto et al. (2024) recorded and acoustically analysed the pronunciation of English alphabet names by 3rd graders and conducted an intelligibility survey with native English speakers. They found that the pronunciation of the letters R, V, Z, P, and L was difficult for native English speakers to understand. It remains unclear to what extent their pronunciation skills of these sounds differs across grade levels. Even under such conditions, Abe (2024) reported that elementary school children enjoyed explicit pronunciation instruction and perceived it as useful.

The acquisition process and difficulties may vary by grade level. Abe (2018) addresses developmental differences in public elementary schools. Focusing on the English sounds L and R, which do not exist in Japanese, Abe conducted pronunciation instruction using picture books and cards with 2nd and 6th graders. The study found that while students from both grades showed improvement in pronunciation abilities, 2nd graders exhibited greater individual differences, suggesting variations in learning experience or developmental stage compared to 6th graders, who had already established knowledge of the alphabet.

There are a few acoustic and perception studies assessing Japanese pupils' English pronunciation. One of the key points of articulating these challenging sounds is the mastery of tongue-tip movement. The investigation of pronunciation using ultrasound, which allows a more visual and detailed capture of the actual state of children's tongue movements, aims to answer a simple question: "What does their pronunciation look like?"

METHOD

Participants

Our study focused on 4th graders (10 years old) and 6th graders (12 years old) attending Japanese public elementary schools (a total 66 students). These ages represent students who have completed two years of foreign language activities and four years of foreign language learning, making them ideal for evaluating the outcomes of elementary English education. Participation was voluntary. The study was approved by the research ethics committee at Hiroshima University, and consent was obtained from the school principal.

Data

Participants were seated individually in a broadcasting room. A collaborator operated the ultrasound machine (Articulate Instruments, 2012) to record the session, while another collaborator placed the ultrasound probe under the student's chin to observe their tongue movements. The students then pronounced the stimuli sounds (ら あら, raa araa, laa alaa) three times.

Analysis

Chi-square Test

We visually categorised participants into two groups: those whose tongue shape for the English /r/ differs from the Japanese /r/ and those whose tongue shape does not differ. We counted the number of participants who produced a correct English /r/ and performed a chi-square test to statistically demonstrate differences in pronunciation between grade levels.

Ultrasound Analysis

Using ultrasound recordings, we qualitatively analysed the tongue shapes in greater detail. For both 4th and 6th graders, we examined whether the tongue tip and/or tongue root differed between the English /r/ and Japanese /r/. With the use of an automatic built-in tracing function in the ultrasound machine, we visualised the contours of the tongue shapes with a red line, making a visual assessment of the English /r/ sounds possible.

RESULTS

Chi-square Test Results

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between grade level and the ability to produce correct /r/ (Table 1). The relation between these variables was significant, $X^2(1, N = 66) = 4.857, p = .0028$. The 6th graders were more likely than the 4th graders to produce correct /r/. Additionally, an effect size was calculated using Cramer's V, which was found to be 0.27. While this effect size is statistically significant, it is moderate in magnitude.

Table 1
The contingency tables for the chi-square test

Grade	Evaluation		Total
	No	Yes	
4	12 (57.14%)	9 (42.85%)	21 (100%)
6	13 (28.89%)	32 (71.11%)	45 (100%)
Total	25 (37.88%)	41 (62.12%)	66 (100%)

The Result of Ultrasound

The ultrasound images below reveal 4th and 6th grade students who did and did not show differences between the pronunciation of the English /r/ and Japanese /r/ sounds (Figure 1). The master group exhibits the characteristic of retroflexion, specifically the tip-up of the tongue.

4th grader - a bad example - No contrast

4th grader - good example - Contrastive

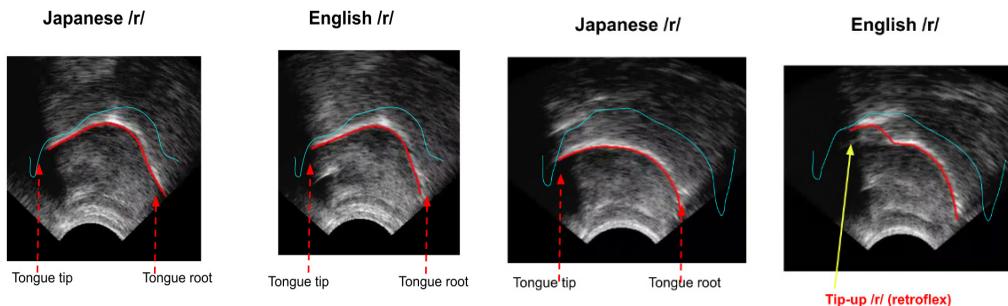


Figure 1. The ultrasound image of two 4th graders

DISCUSSION

The correct pronunciation rate increased from 41% among 4th graders to 71% among 6th graders. This data suggests a difference in learning experience or developmental stage, aligning with the findings of Abe (2018). The 6th graders likely benefited from their established knowledge of the alphabet when learning new sounds.

This indicates that Japanese elementary school English education is effectively facilitating the acquisition of English phonemes that do not exist in Japanese. Our study was conducted at a single school with one teacher, with 5 minutes of phonics practice once a week for 4th graders and twice a week for 6th graders. Thus, it would be interesting to see how the results vary with different schools, teachers, duration, and frequency of pronunciation practice.

Limitations of this study include the following points. As a single-school case study in which one teacher taught English to all students, caution is required when generalising the results. Furthermore, due to constraints on image accuracy, ultrasound findings could only be presented as case examples. There remains scope for collecting more data in future studies.

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Is Feedback from a 3D Avatar as Effective as Feedback from a Real Person?

Junko Tanaka^{1*}, Enqi Wei^{1,2}, and Hajime Murao¹

¹Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University, 1-2-1 Tsurukabuto, 657-8501 Kobe, Japan

²Institute of General Education, Otomon Gakuin University, Ibaraki, 567-0013 Osaka, Japan

ABSTRACT

Research on speech perception suggests that directing attention to a speaker's mouth can strengthen visual-auditory associations that support comprehension. This study investigates whether such benefits extend to online second-language (L2) learning by examining the effectiveness of feedback delivered through 3D avatars that reproduce articulatory movements. Sixteen Chinese-speaking learners of Japanese (beginner to intermediate levels) were assigned to either a 3D-avatar feedback condition or an audio-only condition within an online training environment. Participants completed a pre-test, a feedback session, and immediate and delayed post-tests targeting the acquisition of Japanese particles. The 3D avatars, created with Unity and DiDiMo, were presented as short video clips, while the audio-only group received the sound extracted from those same clips. Descriptive analyses showed that although the 3D-avatar group did not outperform the audio-only group at any testing point, they exhibited larger gains from pre-test to both post-tests. This pattern may reflect the 3D-avatar group's lower initial proficiency; nonetheless, the consistent improvement suggests that visually enriched feedback may support L2 development even when it does not lead to higher absolute performance. Further research with larger samples and methods such as eye-tracking is needed to determine whether increased attention to articulatory cues drives these effects and to clarify the potential pedagogical value of 3D-modeled facial movement in online L2 instruction.

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E-mail addresses:

jtanaka@kobe-u.ac.jp (Junko Tanaka)

i-onki@otomon.ac.jp (Enqi Wei)

hjmr@opal.kobe-u.ac.jp (Hajime Murao)

* Corresponding author

Keywords: Avatar, feedback, L2 Japanese, mouth-movements

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of online communication tools such as Zoom, especially accelerated by COVID-19, online language learning

has become a natural choice. During online communication, some participants choose to hide their faces, which is their right. However, showing one's face provides valuable paralinguistic cues, such as facial expressions, but there is more to showing one's face: it allows the interlocutor to understand the speaker better. It is known that people tend to pay attention to the mouth area of their interlocutor, especially when speech is difficult to hear due to noise, the speaker's non-native accent, or when the listener is an L2 speaker.

The present study is part of a larger study that examines the effect of negative feedback (FB) on L2 learning, particularly on difficult linguistic items such as Japanese particles, when L2 learners are able or unable to look at the face of the FB giver. Based on previous research, we hypothesise that learners who can see the speaker's face, especially the mouth area during FB, will understand the FB better and thus learn the target language more effectively than those who receive auditory (audio-only) FB. Our research question is: Does audiovisual FB that shows the mouth area lead to better L2 learning than auditory FB?

RELATED LITERATURE

Recent neuroscience research has investigated whether attention to the face of the interlocutor, particularly the mouth, enhances audiovisual speech processing (Aller et al., 2022). Chandrasekaran et al. (2009) describe speech communication as a multisensory event in which the speaker's signals align with the listener's neural processing. Birulés et al. (2020) found that even proficient L2 speakers rely on the speaker's mouth when processing speech. Similarly, Grüter et al. (2023) found that L2 proficiency modulates attention to the speaker's mouth. These studies suggest that showing the speaker's face during communication facilitates comprehension more than audio-only interactions. Thus, we decided to experimentally test whether FB delivered via 3D avatars would aid in the learning of difficult, non-linguistically salient particles that L2 learners find hard to acquire through input alone.

METHODS

Sixteen L1 Chinese speakers, most of whom were university students, with intermediate Japanese proficiency responded to a call for participation via SNS. Eight were assigned to a 3D avatar (audio-visual) FB condition and another eight to an auditory (audio-only) FB condition based on self-reported Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) levels.

The 3D avatars were used instead of human interlocutors to avoid variables such as inconsistent facial expressions in live interactions. The avatars were created using DiDiMo, loaded into Unity, and animated using Unity Face Capture to reflect real-time facial movements. We created videos for each FB (30 items in total), focusing on the Japanese particles *o*, *de*, *ni*, with *kara* as a distractor.

Participants first completed a background questionnaire and a vocabulary test. They then completed a pre-test (30 items), a learning session with FB, an immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test one month later. Eye-tracking was planned to assess attention to the avatar's mouth movements, but these data are not yet available.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the results. At pre-test, the auditory FB group demonstrated higher proficiency (i.e., higher knowledge); during the FB session, the 3D avatar group had a mean score of 65.00 ($SD=16.81$), while the auditory FB group had a mean score of 73.33 ($SD=12.97$). In the immediate post-test, the 3D avatar group scored 70.42 ($SD=12.90$) and the auditory FB group scored 74.58 ($SD=12.72$). On the delayed post-test, the 3D avatar group scored 71.67 ($SD=9.76$), while the auditory FB group scored 73.33 ($SD=11.95$).

We also used Quade's nonparametric ANCOVA ($\alpha = .0167$) due to non-normality of the data and unequal variances. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups at any of the sessions: FB, immediate post-test, or delayed post-test.

Contrary to our prediction, however, the 3D avatar group never outperformed the auditory group in any session, which could be partly explained by the fact that the 3D avatar group's proficiency level was 10.45 points lower than the auditory group's at the beginning of the experiment. Although the 3D avatar group never outperformed the auditory group, the former showed a bigger improvement in their gain between the pre-test and both the immediate and delayed post-tests. This means that the FB provided by the 3D avatar had a lasting effect, as evidenced by the greater gain between the pre-test and two post-tests.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics results

		Pre-test	FB Session	Post-test	Delayed Post-test	Short-term Gain	Long-term Gain
		(T1)	(T2)	(T3)	(T4)	(T3-T1)	(T4-T1)
3D Avatar FB (n = 8)	Mean (SD)	51.25 (9.25)	65.00 (16.81)	70.42 (12.90)	71.67 (9.76)	19.17 (3.66)	20.42 (0.51)
	Min	36.67	30.00	43.33	60.00	6.67	23.33
	Max	60.00	86.67	83.33	90.00	23.33	30.00
Auditory FB (n = 8)	Mean (SD)	61.67 (9.43)	73.33 (12.97)	74.58 (12.72)	73.33 (11.95)	12.927 (3.29)	11.67 (2.52)
	Min	46.67	60.00	53.33	50.00	6.67	3.33
	Max	73.33	100.00	93.33	86.67	20.00	13.33

The larger gain for the 3D avatar FB group is consistent with previous research. Birulés et al. (2020) found that listeners paid more attention to the speaker's mouth when the speech was difficult to understand (e.g., speech with background noise, speech by non-native speakers of a language). This means that combining visual information with auditory information could help listeners understand speech better. The FB with the 3D avatar, which provides not only auditory information but also visual information about the mouth movements of "a speaker", must have helped the L2 learners to understand the content of the FB better and thus promoted the learning of the target language items more than the auditory FB group.

To validate the above interpretation, further research with more participants assigned to groups with similar prior knowledge is needed to increase the stability and reliability of the results. In addition, more sophisticated research methods, such as eye-tracking, are needed to investigate whether such an increase in L2 learning was brought about by attention to a 3D avatar that mimics the mouth movements of a human speaker.

With eye-tracking data analyses to follow in the next phase of this research, we should be able to further investigate what in visual information really works in understanding auditory information and how: whether our participants are attending to mouth movements while listening to auditory information, as Birulés et al. (2020) found, or whether the gains were the result of multiple modalities conveying FB information.

This study is unique in that it uses a 3D avatar movie that mimics human mouth movements as FB in L2 learning. If the presence of a 3D avatar helps learners attune to what is conveyed in the FB movie, then it would justify the use of 3D avatars in on-demand or online learning courses instead of live-action movies of human teachers, including those for L2 learning.

CONCLUSION

This experimental study investigated the effect of these two types of FB on the learning of L2 Japanese particles by 16 L1 Chinese learners of L2 Japanese in two groups: one 3D avatar FB group ($n = 8$), in which the 3D avatar mimicked human mouth movements along with auditory information, and another auditory FB group ($n = 8$), in which only audio information was provided. Contrary to our expectation that the 3D avatar FB group would outperform the auditory FB group, there was no statistical difference between the two groups at any point in the experiment. However, the gains between the pre-test and the two post-tests were greater for the 3D avatar FB group.

These preliminary results suggest that the 3D avatar FB may help L2 learners retain rules about Japanese particles better than the auditory FB. This may indicate that 3D avatars, which closely mimic human mouth movements, support L2 learning.

However, it is also possible that the improved performance is simply due to the presence of a human-like head on the screen, and not necessarily due to focusing on the mouth area.

To confirm whether learners do indeed focus on the mouth area, we need further research with more participants and more sophisticated methods using eye-tracking data. If it is found that viewers do focus on the mouth area of 3D avatars, and if this helps them to tune in to the message conveyed by the avatars, then the use of 3D avatars in online or on-demand learning courses will be supported.

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Determinants of Junior High School EFL Students' Discourse Grammar Cloze Test Performance in China's Entrance Examination

Yao Zheng

SEGi University, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The integration of the Discourse Grammar Cloze Test (DGCT) into the Chinese Senior High School Entrance Examination (SHSEE) has added a new dimension to English language assessment, challenging students to apply grammar within a contextual framework. This study examines the impact of content familiarity, text readability, and test format on DGCT performance among 186 EFL ninth-grade students. Results indicate that these factors significantly affect performance, with notable variances across proficiency levels. Analysis of common error types further elucidates the challenges students face, providing insights for pedagogical strategies aimed at improving DGCT outcomes in English education.

Keywords: Content familiarity, discourse grammar cloze test, EFL, senior high school entrance examination, test format, text readability

INTRODUCTION

In the context of China's educational reform, English proficiency assessments, particularly high-stakes exams like the SHSEE, play a pivotal role in determining academic trajectories. The DGCT component, designed to test students' grammatical and discourse-level understanding within realistic language scenarios, poses unique

challenges that traditional cloze tests do not address (Fulcher & Harding, 2022; Jin & Wu, 2021). Prior research underscores the importance of context-based testing for holistic language evaluation, yet limited attention has been given to the DGCT's impact on junior high students (Brown, 2018).

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E-mail address

Yao Zheng (martinyao1997@qq.com)

This study investigates the determinants of DGCT performance, focussing on how content familiarity, text readability, and test format influence outcomes. By exploring these factors, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the variables affecting discourse-based grammar comprehension in EFL settings, offering potential pedagogical implications for curriculum developers and educators.

RESEARCH GAPS

While prior studies acknowledge the complexity of the Discourse Grammar Cloze Test (DGCT) in EFL assessment, three critical gaps remain unaddressed:

1. Limited empirical focus on junior high EFL students within high-stakes testing contexts (e.g., SHSEE) (Jang et al., 2013).
2. Insufficient investigation into how content familiarity, text readability, and test format collectively impact DGCT performance (McNamara et al., 2014).
3. A lack of mixed-methods evidence capturing both quantitative outcomes and learners' qualitative challenges (Bui & Luo, 2021).

METHODS

Adopting a non-experimental, descriptive study design, this research combines quantitative and qualitative data collection to explore factors impacting DGCT performance. The study sample consists of 186 Year 9 EFL students from a junior high school in Zunyi, China, grouped according to English proficiency levels based on their Public English Test System-Level 2 (PETS-2) scores. Instruments include a DGCT test, a multiple-choice cloze test, and retrospective interviews. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 26) to identify significant correlations and to perform regression analysis, supplemented by thematic analysis of interview responses. Ethical procedures were strictly followed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their guardians before data collection. The study received approval from the school administration, and all student data, including interviews, were anonymised to ensure privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Students' performance on the DGCT was significantly lower than on the multiple-choice cloze test (MCCT), confirming the test's higher cognitive and contextual demands. Regression analysis revealed that content familiarity ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$), text readability ($\beta = .29$, $p < .05$), and cloze test format ($\beta = .26$, $p < .05$) were all significant predictors of DGCT scores, jointly explaining 42.5% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.425$). These findings indicate that DGCT performance is closely tied to students' ability to process text meaningfully within context, rather than just isolated grammatical knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the role of content familiarity, readability, and task format as key determinants in DGCT performance. Unlike traditional cloze tests, the DGCT requires students to integrate discourse-level understanding with grammatical precision, a skill set less emphasised in conventional EFL curricula (Jin, Y., & Wu, J., 2021). This difference explains why even students with adequate grammar knowledge struggle when contextual clues are subtle or unfamiliar. Compared to standard grammar cloze formats, the DGCT demands greater awareness of cohesion, coherence, and pragmatic appropriateness, making it uniquely challenging (Baker et al., 2021; McNamara et al., 2014). This finding aligns with recent calls for grammar assessment practices that reflect authentic language use and discourse competence. To apply these insights in classroom practice, teachers can incorporate short DGCT-style exercises that require students to complete texts using appropriate grammatical and cohesive forms. For instance, learners can be guided to identify discourse markers and referential ties in reading passages before filling in contextual gaps. Such practices align with discourse-based grammar instruction models (Oyama & Kang, 2023) and are feasible within junior high school curricula.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing DGCT performance among junior high EFL students, emphasising the need for discourse-sensitive grammar instruction. The results support targeted interventions to improve DGCT performance, such as familiarising students with diverse text types and focusing on discourse-level grammar. Future research could explore additional variables, such as test anxiety and specific instructional methodologies, to offer more comprehensive support for students facing the DGCT.

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Translanguaging in the EFL Practicum: How English Proficiency Shapes Language Practices of Chinese Preservice Teachers

Lixin* and Shameem Rafik-Galea

Faculty of Education, Language, Psychology and Music, SEGi University, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Translanguaging, a practice that integrates a first language (L1) and a second language (L2), has gained attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching for its potential to facilitate communication and learning. Although translanguaging is increasingly studied, research specifically examining its impact in EFL practicum settings remains limited. This mixed-methods study investigates how English language proficiency (ELP) influences the translanguaging practices of 180 Chinese EFL preservice teachers during their practicum at a central China university. Quantitative data were collected using the TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubric to assess ELP and a translanguaging questionnaire to measure translanguaging frequency. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews and classroom observations. Quantitative analysis explored correlations between ELP and translanguaging frequency, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to understand how ELP shapes translanguaging practices. The findings suggest a positive correlation between ELP and translanguaging practices. Specifically, preservice teachers with higher ELP use translanguaging more frequently, particularly for explaining complex content in L1, supporting language proficiency in L2, and creating an inclusive classroom environment. The findings imply that enhancing ELP among Chinese preservice teachers could be instrumental in promoting effective translanguaging practices within EFL classrooms. This study highlights the need to prioritise ELP development in EFL practicum programs. The findings could inform EFL teaching reforms and further the integration of translanguaging in EFL education.

Keywords: English language proficiency, practicum teaching, preservice teacher, translanguaging

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E-mail addresses:

Lixin (lisa0324@163.com)

Shameem Rafik-Galea (shameemkhan@segi.edu.my)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging, which involves the use of both a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) in

teaching, has been increasingly recognised in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education for its potential to improve communication and learning outcomes (Duarte, 2016; García & Li, 2014). Although widely studied, translanguaging's role in EFL practicum settings remains underexplored, particularly regarding how English language proficiency (ELP) influences its application by preservice teachers. Practicum settings provide a unique, real-world context for preservice teachers to practice and adapt translanguaging strategies, yet the relationship between ELP and translanguaging frequency or effectiveness remains unclear (Li et al., 2024).

Existing studies have primarily focussed on translanguaging within classroom instruction (Beltran-Palanques et al., 2024), leaving a gap in understanding how ELP shapes preservice teachers use of translanguaging in practicum experiences. This gap is particularly evident in China, where EFL preservice teachers often face challenges in building both their own English proficiency and effective instructional strategies (Wang & Ai, 2024).

This mixed-methods study examines the influence of ELP on the translanguaging practices of 180 Chinese EFL preservice teachers during their practicum at a university in central China. Quantitative data, collected via TOEFL-based assessments and translanguaging questionnaires, will assess ELP and translanguaging frequency. Qualitative insights from interviews and classroom observations will further reveal how ELP affects specific translanguaging practices, such as using L1 to simplify complex concepts and L2 to build language skills. Findings are anticipated to underscore the importance of ELP in fostering effective translanguaging, offering guidance for EFL teacher training programs, and informing instructional strategies.

METHODS

This study involved 180 Chinese EFL preservice teachers at a central China university, selected due to its prominent role in training future English teachers and its diverse educational context, which provides a valuable setting for examining translanguaging practices and how their English language proficiency (ELP) influences these practices during their practicum. ELP was assessed using the TOEFL Independent Speaking Rubric, and translanguaging frequency was measured through a questionnaire, for which reliability and validity were checked. Additionally, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted. Quantitative analysis explored the correlation between ELP and translanguaging, while qualitative analysis using thematic analysis (semi-structured interviews) and content analysis (classroom observations) examined how ELP shaped translanguaging practices, such as explaining complex content in L1 and supporting L2 learning. Ethical approval for this study was granted by SEGi University Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided informed consent before taking part in the

study. Their confidentiality and privacy were ensured, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study found a positive correlation between English language proficiency (ELP) and translanguaging practices among Chinese EFL preservice teachers. Quantitative analysis showed that teachers with higher ELP scores employed translanguaging more frequently, $r(178) = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$, especially using their first language (L1) to explain complex concepts and the second language (L2) to enhance language proficiency. Qualitative results supported this, with observations indicating that higher proficiency teachers balanced L1 and L2 to create an inclusive classroom environment (Tai & Wong, 2023), aiding student understanding (Sun, 2024). In contrast, lower proficiency teachers leaned on L1 without utilising L2 effectively.

The study faced limitations, such as being conducted in a single institution, which could restrict the generalisability of findings. Further research across multiple universities and additional measures, like student engagement and learning outcomes, is recommended to confirm the role of ELP in translanguaging practices.

CONCLUSION

This study offers initial insights into how English language proficiency influences translanguaging practices among Chinese EFL preservice teachers. Findings suggest that higher proficiency facilitates more effective use of translanguaging, supporting inclusive teaching and clearer communication. Further research could deepen understanding and guide EFL practicum enhancements.

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Navigating the Lingual Waters: Challenges and Solutions for Malaysian Seafarers in Maritime English Communication

Nurul Nadia Ansar^{1*}, Shameem Rafik-Galea², and Normaizura Mat Rom³

¹*Centre for Core Studies, Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra, 15730 Kota Bharu, Kelantan*

²*Faculty of Education, Languages, Psychology, and Music, SEGi University, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor*

³*Centre of Liberal Studies, Akademi Laut Malaysia, 78200 Kuala Sungai Baru, Melaka*

ABSTRACT

Effective communication is essential in the maritime industry to maintain seamless operations and ensure safety at sea. In increasingly multinational crews, language barriers and cultural differences remain significant contributors to maritime incidents. To address these issues, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) developed Maritime English (ME) and the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) to standardise and improve verbal communication between crew members and between ships and shore services. This study investigates the communication challenges faced by 27 Malaysian seafarers, focusing on how linguistic diversity, cultural factors, and technical jargon affect their ability to convey and comprehend information accurately. Data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews, analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study also examines the role of technology—such as translation software, messaging applications, and integrated communication systems—in supporting Maritime English in multilingual contexts. Findings provide maritime-specific recommendations to enhance training programmes, including integrating SMCP-based drills, maritime-focused video resources, and multi-tool communication strategies. By addressing these challenges, the study contributes to improving safety and operational efficiency in the Malaysian maritime sector while strengthening Malaysia's role in the global maritime community.

Keywords: Communication challenges, Malaysian seafarers, Maritime English, multilingual maritime

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E-mail addresses:

Nurul Nadia Ansar (nadia@kias.edu.my)

Shameem Rafik-Galea (shameemgalea@gmail.com)

Normaizura Mat Rom (normaizura@alam.edu.my)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

The global nature of the maritime industry necessitates a common language for safe and efficient operations. The International

Maritime Organisation (IMO) mandates the use of English—particularly through its Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP)—to standardise verbal communication between ships, and between ships and shore services. Despite this standardisation, non-native English-speaking seafarers, including Malaysians, continue to face significant challenges in mastering Maritime English.

In multinational crews, differences in language proficiency, pronunciation, and cultural communication norms can lead to misunderstandings, delayed responses, and, in some cases, safety risks. Prior research has shown that miscommunication remains a contributing factor in maritime incidents, yet much of the available literature focuses on general English proficiency or on global and regional seafarer populations, rather than on the specific linguistic and operational realities faced by Malaysian crews.

While IMO regulations provide a framework for standardising Maritime English, there is limited understanding of how Malaysian seafarers experience and navigate communication challenges in real-world operational contexts. Without targeted, context-specific strategies, linguistic barriers and inconsistent use of SMCP may continue to hinder both safety and operational efficiency.

Existing studies often examine Maritime English in an international context but rarely address the intersection of language proficiency, cultural diversity, and technological support tools within the Malaysian maritime workforce. The literature lacks empirical evidence on how Malaysian seafarers apply SMCP in daily operations, how they overcome communication barriers, and how technology can be integrated into language training to address these issues.

This study offers new insights by focusing exclusively on Malaysian seafarers and combining quantitative and qualitative data to examine the linguistic and technological dimensions of Maritime English use. By identifying challenges, coping strategies, and the role of digital tools, it provides maritime-specific, context-driven recommendations for training institutions, shipping companies, and policymakers, bridging the gap between global standards and localised practice.

RELATED LITERATURE

Effective communication is vital in both the maritime and aviation sectors, where language limitations can have direct safety implications. Research on radiotelephony communication in aviation highlights issues—such as non-standard phraseology, accent variation, and speech rate—that closely parallel challenges in Maritime English. In both industries, precise, concise, and unambiguous communication depends heavily on language competence, particularly among non-native speakers (Kim, 2023).

In maritime contexts, mixed-nationality crews with varying levels of English proficiency often experience misinterpretations that hinder operations and jeopardise

safety. While the IMO's Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) aim to reduce ambiguity, inconsistent application remains common (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010; Litikova, 2021a).

Recent studies have begun to address the impact of digital transformation and post-COVID operational changes on maritime communication. For instance, Wang et al. (2021) reported that the shift towards remote vessel inspections and increased reliance on digital communication platforms during COVID-19 heightened the importance of written and asynchronous communication in English. Similarly, Alqurashi et al. (2022a) found that integrated maritime communication systems, when combined with standardised language protocols, significantly improved cross-border operational clarity. These findings point to a growing need for seafarers to be adept not only in spoken SMCP but also in using digital communication tools effectively.

Furthermore, Hangad and Clarin (2023b) observed that online and blended maritime English training—necessitated by pandemic restrictions—enhanced vocabulary retention and technical language use when coupled with simulation-based learning. This is consistent with developments in the aviation sector, where interactive simulations and virtual reality are increasingly adopted to replicate real-world communication scenarios and improve phraseology retention (Kim, 2023).

Lessons from aviation's solutions—such as structured language training, strict adherence to standardised phraseology, and the integration of communication-support technology—are highly relevant to maritime contexts. The adoption of maritime-specific e-learning platforms, interactive SMCP drills, and real-time translation systems mirrors aviation's Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) in its capacity to enhance operational clarity and reduce misinterpretation.

This cross-industry and post-pandemic perspective emphasises that ongoing education, digital skill integration, and consistent use of standardised communication practices are essential in reducing language-related problems and enhancing both safety and operational efficiency at sea.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 27 Malaysian seafarers participated in the study, representing various ranks including Captains, Chief Engineers, Deck Officers, Engine Officers, Electrotechnical Officers, Technical Superintendents, Ratings, and Cadets. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 55 years, with sailing experience varying from less than 3 years to over 10 years.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure diversity in years of experience, linguistic background, and shipboard responsibilities. Recruitment was conducted via institutional channels (maritime academies and professional associations), email invitations to alumni networks, and social media platforms (LinkedIn and Facebook groups for maritime professionals).

The survey questionnaire was adapted from previous studies on maritime communication (Baugh & Stolzer, 2018) and contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended items measured the frequency of Maritime English usage, difficulty levels in specific contexts, and effectiveness ratings of technological tools. Open-ended items invited respondents to share personal experiences and coping strategies. The semi-structured interview protocol was designed to elicit detailed narratives regarding language barriers, pronunciation and accent issues, and training experiences.

Ethical approval was obtained from Malaysian Maritime Academy. All participants provided informed consent before participation. Responses were anonymised, and participants were informed they could withdraw at any stage without consequence. Quantitative survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean ratings) to identify trends in language use and communication challenges. Qualitative data were analysed using Thomas's General Inductive Approach (Thomas, 2006), which provides a systematic and transparent method for deriving themes from raw textual data. The analysis followed three key stages. First, during data reduction, interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses were read repeatedly and condensed into brief, meaningful units. Second, in the stage of category development, these units were grouped based on similarity to generate initial categories representing recurring ideas. Finally, thematic refinement was conducted by revisiting and merging categories, removing overlaps, and aligning the emerging themes with the study's objectives. This process produced clear, evidence-based themes grounded in participants' experiences, ensuring analytic rigour and credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents (85%) had over 10 years of sailing experience, with 11% having less than 3 years and 4% between 7–9 years. The sample represented a range of positions, including Captains, Marine Engineers, Deck Officers, Electrotechnical Officers, Technical Superintendents, Ratings, and Cadets. Malay was identified as the primary language for 66% of respondents, followed by English (18%), with 16% using a combination of languages (e.g., Malay-English or Tamil-English). This distribution underscores a strong tendency toward Malay as the dominant language, while also reflecting bilingual capabilities among a portion of the participants.

The study further explored how frequently respondents use Maritime English in their work environments. The data on the frequency of Maritime English usage at work (Figure 1) reveal a high level of engagement with the language in professional settings. Nearly half of the respondents (45%) reported using Maritime English “often” while an additional 33% indicated that they “always” use it. A smaller portion, 22%, stated that they use Maritime English “sometimes.” No respondents indicated that they “never” or

“rarely” use Maritime English at work, which underscores its important role in everyday communication. These results suggest that Maritime English is widely used in professional settings, with most respondents depending on it frequently or consistently.

The survey also explored how often respondents encounter difficulties in understanding Maritime English instructions (Figure 2). The data show that most respondents experience minimal difficulty in comprehension, with 52% of respondents reporting that they “rarely” encounter difficulties, while 26% mentioned they “never” have issues. A smaller group, 14%, indicated they experience difficulties “sometimes” and only 8% of respondents reported facing challenges “often” or “always.” These findings suggest that comprehension of Maritime English instructions is generally high, with the majority of respondents experiencing few or no challenges in understanding.

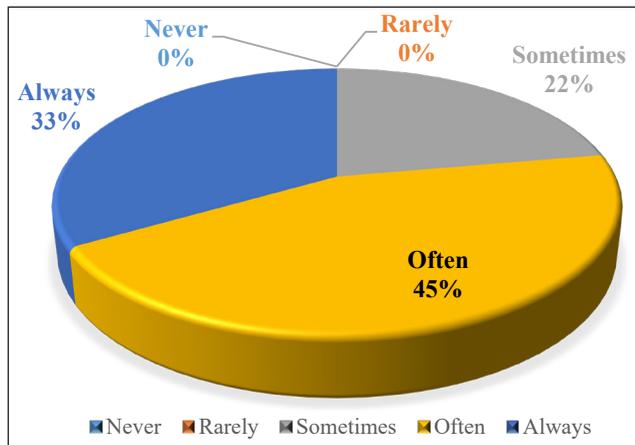


Figure 1. Frequency of maritime English usage at work

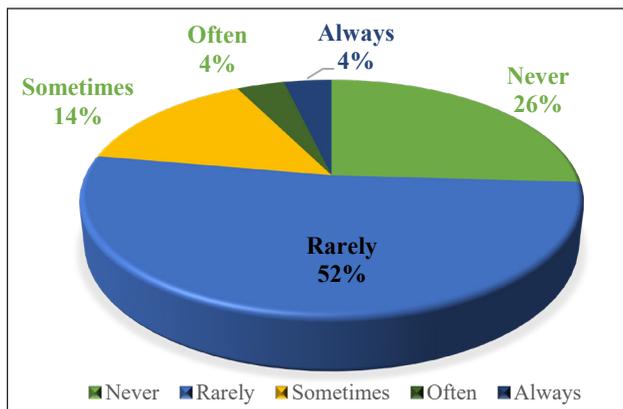


Figure 2. Frequency of difficulties encountered in understanding maritime English instructions

The data, as illustrated in Figure 3, indicate that communication issues during emergencies are infrequent among respondents. The majority of respondents, 59% reported that they “rarely” experience communication issues during emergencies, while 15% said they “never” encounter such problems. An additional 11% mentioned facing issues “sometimes” and another 11% reported experiencing them “often.” Only 4% indicated that they “always” face communication challenges in emergencies. These results suggest that communication challenges in emergencies are generally limited, with most respondents rarely or never experiencing such difficulties.

The study revealed several key communication challenges faced by Malaysian seafarers, with the most significant being accent and pronunciation issues. Variations in pronunciation, particularly when diverging from the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) norm, can lead to misunderstandings, especially in multilingual and multinational crew environments (Litikova, 2021a). Similar findings have been reported by Froholdt (2010), who noted that non-standard pronunciations in ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communication can impede operational clarity. Training on SMCP-based standard pronunciation and encouraging seafarers to request repetition or clarification are effective strategies for minimising such risks.

Another critical challenge is understanding technical jargon specific to the maritime industry. New entrants to the sector often struggle with specialised terminology, such as navigation commands and machinery operation terms, which can lead to operational confusion and errors (Romanovska, 2024). Bocanegra-Valle (2011a) emphasises that technical vocabulary acquisition is essential for safe operations, particularly in high-pressure environments. To address this, language training should integrate maritime-specific audio-visual resources, such as the IMO Model Course 3.17: Maritime English, COLREGS

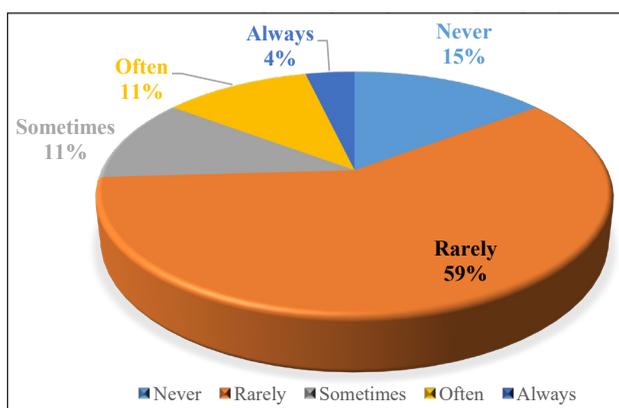


Figure 3. Frequency of communication issues experienced during emergencies

(Collision Regulations) training videos, and recorded VHF radio communications, which present technical vocabulary in authentic contexts and operational scenarios.

English inconsistency on board remains another barrier to effective communication. This aligns with findings from Pyne and Koester (2005), who found that mixed-language use during critical operations increases the risk of misinterpretation. To promote uniformity, crew members should be encouraged to adopt English consistently for operational communication, supported by onboard drills where SMCP usage is mandatory.

The study also found that peer support plays an important role, with less experienced crew often seeking guidance from seasoned colleagues. This is consistent with Hangad and Clarin (2023b), who observed that informal mentoring contributes to improved speaking confidence among maritime students. Such practices could be formalised through structured mentorship programmes that integrate language support into operational training.

Technological tools were also identified as valuable aids. Translation software, while useful, is most effective when combined with other shipboard communication systems such as GMDSS, public address systems, and dedicated messaging platforms. Alqurashi et al. (2022a) similarly concluded that integrated communication systems enhance operational efficiency when used alongside standardised language protocols. Incorporating these tools into simulation-based training can allow seafarers to practice both linguistic and technological competencies in realistic operational contexts.

Rather than relying on general strategies like watching English movies with subtitles—which apply broadly to any language learner—this study recommends industry-specific multimedia materials developed by recognised maritime organisations. Examples include INTERCARGO safety videos, BIMCO e-learning modules, and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) operational clips, which combine technical language input with visual demonstrations of real-life maritime operations. Such resources support Bocanegra-Valle's (2011b) call for ESP (English for Specific Purposes) materials that balance linguistic development with domain-specific operational competence.

By aligning language training with authentic maritime contexts and leveraging existing industry resources, seafarers can build targeted communication competence that directly supports safety and operational efficiency at sea. This approach bridges the gap between generic English learning strategies and the operational realities of maritime communication, addressing the sector-specific needs identified in this study.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study has highlighted the primary communication challenges faced by Malaysian seafarers, including difficulties with accents and pronunciation, understanding maritime-specific technical jargon, inconsistent use of English on board, and the need to effectively integrate technology into communication practices. Addressing these

challenges requires targeted action from maritime academies and training institutions. Training programmes should incorporate maritime-specific English modules based on *IMO Model Course 3.17: Maritime English*, integrating Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) and technical vocabulary through authentic materials such as VHF radio recordings, engine room instructions, and navigational briefings. Language instruction should be paired with simulation-based training to allow learners to apply vocabulary and communication strategies in realistic operational scenarios. Industry-endorsed multimedia resources from organisations like BIMCO, INTERCARGO, and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) should be embedded into curricula to combine language learning with technical and procedural knowledge. Peer-mentorship programmes can further support trainees by facilitating guidance from experienced mariners, while technology-focused instruction should train cadets to use translation software, messaging platforms, and integrated communication systems (e.g., GMDSS) in conjunction with English protocols. By aligning training initiatives with both linguistic and operational competencies, stakeholders can enhance the safety, efficiency, and global competitiveness of Malaysian seafarers.

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Multicultural Identity Construction of Malaysian Chinese Youth on Social Media: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Shao Juan Huang^{1,2*} and Shameem Rafik-Galea²

¹Anhui Polytechnic University, 241000 Wuhu, Anhui, China

²Segi University, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has reshaped communication, generating new linguistic phenomena. Malaysian Chinese youth, immersed in Chinese family traditions and Malay and English social environments, leverage platforms like TikTok to construct their self-identity. Despite this complexity, the multilingual and multimodal dimensions of such practices remain understudied. This study, employing multimodal discourse analysis supported by systemic functional linguistics (SF-MDA), addresses this gap by investigating: What systemic functional linguistic and multimodal features do Malaysian Chinese youth employ on TikTok to construct their multicultural identity? The findings reveal firstly that two distinct patterns emerge: English-dominated multilingual practices, and code-mixing phenomenon (English-Chinese, or English-Malay mixing). Secondly, Malaysian Chinese youth online communication transcends Malay, English, and Chinese, integrating visual components such as signs, images, body language, and facial expressions. Non-linguistic visual aspects are utilised more often than non-linguistic auditory elements. And thirdly, five multimodal strategies are identified: visual-autonomous, visual-dominant, auditory-autonomous, auditory-dominant, and co-dominant, with co-dominant being the most frequently employed.

Keywords: Malaysian Chinese youth, multicultural identity construction, SF-MDA, social media, TikTok

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E-mail addresses:

Shao Juan Huang (17051234@qq.com)

Shameem Rafik-Galea (shameemkhan@segi.edu.my)

* Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

The initial two generations of Malaysian Chinese prioritised their Chinese cultural legacy over their Malaysian national identification, whereas later generations increasingly identify as Malaysian (Gabriel, 2016). Social media has become an essential platform for the expression and negotiation

of identities, allowing young Malaysian Chinese to disseminate pictures and narratives that embody hybrid cultural experiences (Shafie et al., 2012; Soto et al., 2023).

Despite the recent expansion of research on multicultural identities (Hong et al., 2016; Miller & Collette, 2019), a notable gap persists regarding the influence of social media—especially visual and multimodal platforms—on the formation of these identities in transcultural contexts such as Malaysia. Current research on online identity formation frequently adheres to mono-cultural paradigms (Huang et al., 2020) or primarily emphasises textual discourse, overlooking the extensive semiotic capabilities of multimodal communication (Kress & Leeuwen, 2020; O'Halloran, 2023). Moreover, although certain scholars have explored digital identity performances in general (Georgalou, 2016; Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015), limited research has focused on how Malaysian Chinese youth strategically utilise multimodal resources to express intricate, context-specific identities that balance ethnic heritage and national affiliation.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by employing a multimodal discourse analysis methodology to investigate how young Malaysian Chinese utilise platforms such as TikTok to develop and express multicultural identity. This not only extends theoretical considerations of multicultural identity into digital and visual domains but also provides actual insights from an underrepresented sociocultural setting.

METHODS

This study utilises multimodal discourse analysis to examine how Malaysian Chinese teenagers on TikTok exploit systemic functional linguistic and visual resources to form their multicultural identity. This research examines the subsequent inquiries: Which languages (Malay, English, or Chinese) are utilised in these videos? Which modes, linguistic or non-linguistic, are favoured? How do the interactions between visual and auditory aspects enhance the representation of multicultural identity?

The sample comprises 285 TikTok videos produced by five Malaysian Chinese content creators. The creators were chosen via stratified random sampling, with each regarded as an individual stratum to guarantee diversity in content style, audience reach, and performance methodology. This strategy improves the sample's representativeness across diverse expressive methods and viewer engagements. Videos were restricted to those released between December 2020 and June 2024 to document contemporary multimodal practices, emphasising present identity performances above longitudinal progress. To guarantee cultural relevance and significant viewer involvement, only publicly accessible videos with a minimum of 1,500 likes were considered. Ethical considerations were mitigated by anonymising all usernames and identifiable metadata from publicly accessible TikTok videos. Despite the absence of a requirement for informed permission under existing

criteria for public material, we guaranteed that no private or sensitive information was incorporated into the study.

The analytical approach incorporates Halliday's (2000) Systemic Functional Grammar, Kress and Leeuwen's (2020) Visual Grammar, and O'Halloran's (2023) multimodal analysis methodology. This tripartite paradigm facilitates a detailed analysis of meaning construction across several modalities and their interaction in expressing identity. Coding categories were established to document language selection, modality preference, and visual-auditory interactions. Utilising Cohn's (2016) taxonomy of multimodal interaction, visual-auditory connections were categorised into two primary types—autonomous and dominant—each subdivided into five subtypes: auditory-autonomous, visual-autonomous, auditory-dominant, visual-dominant, and co-dominant.

To guarantee analytical transparency and reproducibility, two independent coders were instructed using a pilot sample of 30 videos. Inter-coder agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa, resulting in satisfactory reliability ($\kappa \geq 0.80$ for all principal categories). The use of TikTok is justified by its popularity among youth and its inherently multimodal structure (Madianou, 2020; Shuter, 2012), which enables intricate identity formation through the combined use of video, audio, text, and effects. This methodological rigour enhances the validity of the coding process and the subsequent interpretation of the semiotic construction of multicultural identities in digital contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of TikTok short videos indicated that subjects employed English-dominant multilingual practices, with English comprising 51.01% of written language and 33.93% of spoken language (Table 1). Malay was documented in writing form at a rate of 15.4%, however Chinese was predominantly utilised in oral communication, accounting for 23.66% of verbal expressions. The patterns indicate that subjects strategically utilised multilingual resources to improve communication with their target audience and to convey an internationalised, diverse representation of Malaysian Chinese youth in digital environments, aligning with research on identity performance in digital multilingual contexts (Albury, 2017; Gabriel, 2016). Moreover, code-switching between languages within a single sentence was common, happening in 24.75% of written English and 16.96% of spoken English segments. This linguistic blending of Chinese, Malay, and English demonstrates a deliberate initiative to promote cultural integration and articulate a hybrid identity that resonates with both local Malaysian and global youth cultures (Hong et al., 2016; Pekerti & Thomas, 2016).

Malaysian Chinese youth had a stronger preference for non-linguistic visual features over non-linguistic auditory components. Of the five subjects, three (samples 1, 2, and 4)

exhibited a distinct inclination for visual modalities, with usage rates of 50.00%, 51.67%, and 15.83%, respectively (Table 2). Visual symbols are typically more immediate and globally accessible, facilitating faster understanding and wider engagement across varied audiences (Kress & Leeuwen, 2020). This preference highlights a deliberate application of visual media to traverse multicultural environments, affirm self-identity, and offer an open, inclusive portrayal of Malaysian Chinese youth. This corresponds with research on identity expression via visual indicators on social media (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015) and the significance of multimodal resources in constructing digital identity (Kress & Leeuwen, 2020).

Table 1
Language use distribution in TikTok videos of Malaysian Chinese youth

Language Type	Written Language (%)	Spoken Language (%)	Primary Function
English	51.01%	33.93%	Projecting an internationalised image, primary tool for communication
Malay	15.40%	21.88%	Local cultural embedding, communication with domestic audiences
Chinese	6.57%	23.66%	Ethnic cultural identity, communication within the Chinese community
Code-switching	24.75% (within English)	16.96% (within English)	Constructing a hybrid identity, enhancing cultural integration
Other	2.27%	3.57%	--

Table 2
Preference for non-linguistic modalities (Sample analysis)

Sample ID	Non-linguistic Visual Modality (%)	Non-linguistic Audio Modality (%)	Explanation
Sample 1	50.00%	30.00%	High reliance on visual symbols (e.g., text labels, effects)
Sample 2	51.67%	15.00%	Visual as the dominant modality for rapid information and emotional delivery
Sample 3	19.15%	38.29%	--
Sample 4	15.83%	5.00%	More balanced but still skewed towards visual elements
Sample 5	15.83%	25.00%	--
Overall Trend	Dominant (average: 30.50%)	Secondary (average: 22.66%)	Visual modalities are more intuitive and facilitate cross-cultural understanding and resonance

The analysis of multimodal relations revealed that auditory-autonomous and auditory-dominant categories were the least prevalent (Table 3), indicating that sound assumes a secondary role in these TikTok videos. In contrast, visual features were utilised more extensively to communicate meaning and construct identity (Bateman, 2014; O'Halloran, 2023). Furthermore, co-dominant multimodal relationships—where visual and aural components function synergistically—constituted 49.48% of the content. The combined utilisation of both modalities enhances meaning-making, facilitating improved representation, interaction, and compositional equilibrium, as discussed in multimodal discourse analysis (Cohn, 2016; Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

Table 3
Multimodal relationship types and their functions

Type	Importance	Primary Function in Identity Construction
Visual-dominant	19.51%	Independently conveys core information, shapes intuitive identity image
Audio-dominant	3.83%	Plays a weak auxiliary role in the selected samples
Co-dominant	49.48%	Audio and visual complement each other for complete meaning-making, effectively constructing a multicultural identity
Audio-autonomous	3.48%	Has limited significance in meaning transmission

CONCLUSION

These findings highlight the substantial influence of multilingual and multimodal activities on TikTok, demonstrating how Malaysian Chinese youth actively curate their heterogeneous identities. This indicates that for digital natives, multiculturalism is experienced and articulated the daily, creative combination of global and local semiotic resources, transcending conventional demographic classifications. The ramifications pertain to educators and politicians, underscoring the necessity to acknowledge these digital practices as legitimate and intricate forms of cultural expression. Future research should investigate the interaction between online identity performances and offline social networks to enhance comprehension of the comprehensive identity formation among this diverse youth group.

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Investigating the Usability of Rosetta Stone in Language Learning: The Case of Hassan I University in Morocco

Laachir Abdelouahed

*Laboratory of Education, Humanities and Languages, The Higher School of Education and Training,
Hassan I University, 26100 Berrechid, Morocco*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of Rosetta Stone, a digital language learning program, at a Moroccan university. Higher education institutions in Morocco are under growing pressure to use cutting-edge teaching strategies as English becomes increasingly important in academic research and international communication. As a user-friendly, engaging, and adaptable platform, Rosetta Stone enhances conventional language training. Based on users, this study investigates its effects on students' language proficiency, motivation, and learning autonomy. Results show that most students who participated in the study found the platform effective and easy to use. They also reported that it enhanced their autonomous learning experience. Furthermore, Rosetta Stone can help fill gaps in language training. However, issues such as cost, accessibility, and integration into the existing curriculum remain major obstacles. The study ends with suggestions regarding how educators and policymakers might best utilise digital resources like Rosetta Stone to enhance English language instruction in Moroccan universities.

Keywords: Autonomous learning, effectiveness, English language learning, higher education in Morocco, Rosetta stone, usability

INTRODUCTION

Traditional teaching techniques have been completely transformed by the use of technology into education, especially when it comes to language acquisition. Rosetta Stone and other digital platforms provide creative ways to overcome the drawbacks of traditional language training. Rosetta Stone is a potential tool for enhancing English

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E-mail address:

Laachir Abdelouahed (Abdelouahed.laachir@uhp.ac.ma)

competence in higher education settings because it uses immersive, interactive, and adaptable learning strategies that meet the various requirements of learners (Johnson, 2023). In Morocco, English is increasingly considered as an important skill to ensure successful education and well qualified graduates for the job market. Therefore, the integration of digital language learning platforms in education has become necessary to cope with the ever-changing demands of the 21st-century education (El-Haddadi & Boutahar, 2024). Recent studies confirm that Rosetta Stone's focus on self-paced modules, contextual learning, and accurate pronunciation greatly develops language learning (Smith et al., 2022). Furthermore, Rosetta Stone's ability to enhance student autonomy is in line with the Moroccan higher education sector's policy on the development of 21st-century skills, such as digital literacy and self-directed learning (Amrani & Belghiti, 2023). However, little research has been conducted on the successful use of Rosetta Stone in Moroccan universities, despite its promise. Its broader implementation is still hindered by issues like accessibility, and incorporation into the current curriculum. Through the evaluation of Rosetta Stone's use in a Moroccan university, this study aims to contribute to studies conducted on digital learning implementation by sharing insights with stakeholders and decision-makers about the effectiveness of Rosetta Stone for language learning. The results can help improve the quality of use and implementation of this language learning platform in addition to improving the experience of students' use and self-directed learning through the platform.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative approach to evaluate the implementation of Rosetta Stone in Hassan the First University, Morocco. Data were collected using structured surveys administered to 100 undergraduate students, belonging to the Higher School of Education and Training, Hassan I University (Affiliated to Hassan the First University), Morocco, who used Rosetta Stone for English language learning. The survey was administered via an online QR code that was shared with more than 200 students, but the return rate is 100. The survey targets students' use of the application, effectiveness, usability, and impact on students' language proficiency and autonomy in learning. The collected data was analysed quantitatively through Google Form. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the collected data in order to identify efficacy and ascertain how much Rosetta Stone helps in English language learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Table 1 demonstrates the frequency distribution of usability, efficacy, and learning autonomy in Rosetta Stone on a scale of 1 to 5. The highest mean scores were 3.8 for effectiveness, 4.0 for learning autonomy, and 4.2 for usability.

Table 1

Mean ratings and percentage of positive responses for Rosetta Stone's usability, learning autonomy, and effectiveness

Category	Mean Rating (Scale 1-5)	Percentage of Positive Responses
Usability	4.2	84%
Learning Autonomy	4.0	76%
Effectiveness	3.8	80%

The chart shows the percentage of students who gave positive feedback regarding their use of Rosetta Stone. The most positive responses were given to usability (84%), effectiveness (76%), and learning autonomy (80%).

The findings of the study show that students' attitudes towards Rosetta Stone were generally satisfactory, with the most desired feature of the platform being its usability. This reveals that students find the platform easy to access and use, even for those with varying levels of technical proficiency. Their learning process is also facilitated by the user-friendly design, and hence their satisfaction and engagement are enhanced. Rosetta Stone's usability, which the students identified as its primary asset, might be attributed to its user-friendly design, thereby supporting autonomous learning. Thus, students can quickly get used to the platform even if they lack technical knowledge and assistance.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider extra characteristics of the platform such as generative feedback, the range of content, and interaction, which helps having a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Though most students feel at ease when using the platform, future research could investigate the development of students' proficiency level over time to examine the extent to which the platform has a positive impact on their language learning or not.

The findings of this study also demonstrate that the use of Rosetta Stone helps students develop their linguistic competence, which is consistent with earlier studies that documented measurable gains after sustained program use (Vesselinov, 2009; Vesselinov & Grego, 2019) and with the quasi-experimental results reported by Ikonta (2015). Though the present study did not adopt any experimental design, it remains a good contribution to the educational digital transformation implementation in Moroccan higher educational system.

To conclude, the results demonstrate that Rosetta Stone's ease of use led students to hold a positive perception of its usefulness, as well as of their autonomy level which increases over time since students rely solely on themselves to learn on the platform without any external restrictions.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Rosetta Stone is deemed to be a treasured tool for language learners at Hassan 1st university in Morocco, due to its remarkable advantages in usability and in enhancing self-directed learning. Rosetta Stone's features and design have effectively engaged students and encouraged unsupervised learning. However, to improve its effectiveness, further enhancements are necessary, especially in its teaching techniques and the eminence of its learning tasks. For a better learning experience, it is recommended to do regular updates and changes to the platform. Additionally, the results urge the need for future research on how Rosetta Stone impacts long-term language retention and proficiency.

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Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

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TGU - Turkish-German University

UIC - United International College
UINRIL - Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung
UiTM - Universiti Teknologi MARA
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Pertanika Journal Section
UPM Press Centre
Putra Science Park
1st Floor, IDEA Tower II
UPM-MTDC Centre
Universiti Putra Malaysia
43400 UPM Serdang
Selangor, Malaysia

<http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my>
Email: executive_editor.pertanika@upm.edu.my
Tel. No.: +603- 9769 1622



<http://penerbit.upm.edu.my>
Email: dir.penerbit@upm.edu.my
Tel. No.: +603- 9769 3606

