

Pertanika Journal of  
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& HUMANITIES**

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**VOL. 30 (S1) 2022**

*A special issue devoted to*  
Language Education: Conceptual and Practical Explorations (LECPE 2022)

*Guest Editors*

Charanjit Kaur Swaran Singh, Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf and Gulzhaina K. Kassymova



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# PERTANIKA JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

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## Preface

Language education is the responsibility of everyone, not just language teachers and researchers. Language is a complex of knowledge and abilities that enables speakers of the language to communicate with one another. Studies on language use and other linguistic elements that affect communication are pertinent in this context. They inevitably become a part of language education, and the use of various media impacts how languages are taught and learned. The current state of the world necessitates using these media, particularly the digital kind, to distribute knowledge and information. Another component of language used for communication is culture, and the cultures employed for communication in one language and another are different. The comparison of the various communication cultures opens a vast range of research subjects. Such initiation will raise awareness of linguistic commonalities and encourage collaboration and exchange among researchers and practitioners.

Exploring the educational aspects of language is the focus of this Special Issue of *Pertanika JSSH* on language education. The theoretical and practical facets of language instruction are covered. It considers problems in the modern classroom to reflect the current requirements, conundrums, and solutions of the predominating instructional situations. Various limits are encountered continuously in all scenarios involving the languages taught, not just those involving one particular language.

In this issue, we offer articles that cover a range of subjects interesting to individuals who work in language education. For example, there is an article that explores the use of video clip subtitles for vocabulary instruction, a study of face and politeness in classroom interaction, challenges in academic speaking for non-native speakers, the effects of visual input and text types on the listening comprehension of EFL students, and the metacognitive strategies and gender differences on ESL students' listening comprehension. This Special Issue is intended to ease some, if not all, of the constraints in various language classroom situations. Additionally, the variety of topics is expected to make suitable reference materials and further entice prospective researchers to delve deeper into language instruction.

Lastly, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who contributed their experiences and thoughts through their research articles for this Special Issue. We also thank our reviewers for assuring each article's good academic quality. Finally, we extend our most profound appreciation to the Pertanika JSSH personnel for their patience and cooperation throughout the review process and publication.

### **Guest Editors**

Charanjit Kaur Swaran Singh (*Assoc. Prof. Dr.*)

Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf (*Prof. Dr.*)

Gulzhaina K. Kassymova (*Dr.*)

## **Watch and Learn: EFL Students' Perceptions of Video Clip Subtitles for Vocabulary Instruction**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Implementing the online learning process requires qualified EFL teachers as agents of change to get hold of effective learning resources to help students achieve learning goals. This pilot study explores EFL students' perceptions from two private Islamic senior high schools in urban areas in Aceh Province, Indonesia, towards using video clips with subtitles (bimodal of English-Indonesian) while learning English in the classroom. The study applied the mixed-methods design by disseminating a questionnaire to 78 participants and conducting a semi-structured interview with ten selected participants. Findings revealed that most students positively perceived using subtitled video clips in learning English vocabulary. However, some encountered setbacks in learning English words due to the poor use of the elements in the video clip subtitles. Therefore, the subtitling procedures still need revisiting to assist students better in digesting subtitled movies in a more well-organized manner.

*Keywords:* EFL students, English vocabulary, prototype media, subtitles, video clips

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused changes in all aspects of life, including the education sector. Among these is the change in learning from face-to-face to distance learning or online learning (Bashir et al., 2021) using the latest Instructional Computer and Technology (ICT). Wang and Woo (2007) asserted that ICT is principally

apparatuses of hardware (i.e., digital camera, video recorder, projector, computer, among others) and software (i.e., video, film, Microsoft of presentation, among others). Liu (2009) further stated that technology has “a greater role during class and home study, as computer-assisted instruction and interactive media technologies supplement the traditional use of chalk and the blackboard.” Thus, digital technology is expected to enhance effective English language instruction in a face-to-face or virtual learning setting and facilitate better learning outcomes.

The research by Mulyani and Chaira (2021) showed that from the nonparametric statistical (using SPSS Statistics 22) tests with the Wilcoxon Test, taken by 30 eleventh-grade students in a private senior high school in Aceh, Indonesia. There was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test using video clips with subtitles (bimodal) of English-Indonesia (the prototype of learning media product) in English vocabulary instruction. Therefore, the sequence of vocabulary learning activities using the prototype bimodal

English-Indonesia video clips applied in the study was designed in five-part clips to learn English vocabulary. Thus, there were five steps of activities to conduct in the teaching instruction: (1) watched video clips with the original English audio without subtitles taken from one or two films/movies for 10 minutes, (2) watched the video clips with audio and subtitles in English for 10 minutes, (3) watched the video clips with audio and subtitles in English and Indonesian (bimodal) for 10 minutes, (4) writing down the words, phrases or idioms they obtained from the video clips and the students were asked to construct sentences from the words or phrases individually, and finally, (5) watched the video clips again with the original English audio without subtitles for 10 minutes to test the student’s vocabulary acquisition. The video clip prototype was developed from the existing and popular film downloaded and modified into five-part by cutting and choosing an interesting segment from the original film. The following illustrates the five-part prototype video clips with subtitles developed.

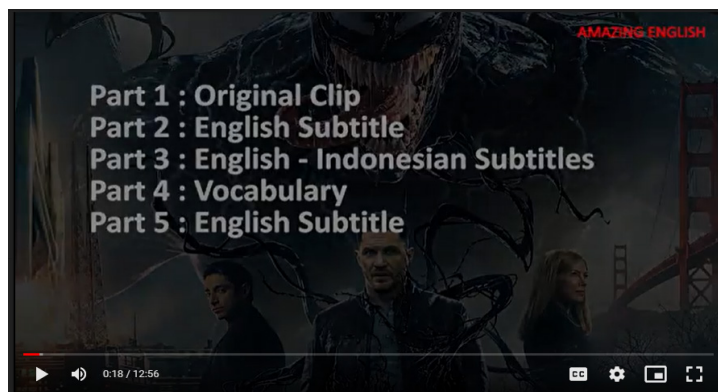


Figure 1. An illustration of five parts prototype video clip with subtitles



Previous research related to the use of video clip subtitles for English vocabulary instruction has been conducted by numerous researchers. To illustrate, in Indonesia, Putra (2014) employed mixed-mode (quantitative and qualitative) research to study the correlation between variables in the use of video clips with subtitles to improve students' vocabulary. The result of this study indicated that English films influenced the understanding of vocabulary when it was watched more than once and further assisted the students in recognizing new vocabulary and learning new expressions in English. This study has verified that watching films or video clips using subtitles improved the students' ability to read, listen, speak, or pronounce English utterances.

Another study by Oladunjoye (2017) also investigated using films and videos to develop students' vocabulary. This quantitative study showed that the participants in the experimental group obtained better results in vocabulary improvement compared to the control group. Gomathi et al. (2017) studied film clip media to improve students' vocabulary mastery for English vocabulary instruction. The result of their study revealed a significant improvement in learning vocabulary based on the pre-test and post-test results as well as semi-structured interviews. These studies have proven that using film clip subtitles offers fun learning and motivates students of different competencies in language learning. Additionally, Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis explains how language is acquired. This hypothesis emphasizes

acquisition. According to this theory, L2 learners will improve when they receive intelligible input one step beyond their skill level ( $i+1$ ). For example, if learners' proficiency is  $I$ , their intelligible input should be  $I + 1$ . Krashen (1985) said learners' input should not be too hard or too easy. For example, new and familiar lexical items will enter the students' minds more simply, provided the motivating and all-encompassing environment offered by this realistic audio-visual atmosphere, making any learning task utilizing captions in video clips (like the one presented above) conducive to deeper comprehension and acquisition of new vocabulary. The translation component makes it possible for low-level pupils, who often do not take advantage of most contextual clues when viewing the video, to experience an easier recollection of lexical knowledge when the five parts (as indicated in Figure 1) or related activities are created using normal subtitles. Also, the translation feature might aid advanced students in picking up new and unusual words that go unnoticed. Therefore, in this study, the video clip subtitles are valuable input for students to learn new vocabulary.

The conventional method of teaching vocabulary relies on the instructor as the primary source of information, presents each word and its meaning and collocation in isolation from the rest of the article, and expects pupils to retain this information mechanically. To address these issues, Constructivists promote a student-centered approach that places the onus of knowledge

construction squarely on the shoulders of the learners. One can look at constructivism from either the “schema” or the “context” perspective. According to Verschueren (1999), “without linguistic context, a word would be only a fragment without any meaning,” hence it is clear that every word has its unique meaning in its unique context. For ‘schema,’ meanwhile, this model is premised on the reflective schema and cognitive framework concept given by constructivist psychology (Gao, 2021). This mode can stimulate the knowledge and experience already stored in the brain and effectively guides learners to organize a comprehensive vocabulary network when learning new words.

Although previous studies have revealed numerous benefits of using video clip subtitles in learning English vocabulary, the use of two subtitles of English-Indonesian at once in one film, film clip, or video consisting of several parts is still not quite often created and utilized by the teachers in the sub-urban areas of EFL classroom context in Indonesia. For instance, Waluyo and Apridayani (2021) revealed that teachers’ beliefs about the use of video in ELT were positive but inconsistent with their practices due to their teaching philosophy, knowledge and skill, facility, and reading of the literature. Moreover, it also applies to the Acehnese in the Indonesian context (i.e., Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia). Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct relevant research to determine why this is so. Accordingly, the current study is critical to see the

EFL Indonesian students’ perspectives, their attitudes, and the background of students’ proficiency, particularly in the Acehnese classroom context, particularly in suburban areas using the five-parts-prototype of English vocabulary learning of a combination media of video clips with subtitles (bimodal of English-Indonesia) (Mulyani & Chaira, 2021). This study is a continuation of Mulyani and Chaira’s (2021) results (i.e., experimental study) on this issue, where this current study focuses more on the EFL students’ responses to using the prototype video clips with subtitles in learning vocabulary. Additionally, the results of this study could become a valuable input to the English teachers in Acehnese classrooms by exposing the EFL students to the target language using video clips with subtitles and an English version. Consequently, this study intends to answer the following research question:

- What are the EFL students’ responses to using the prototype bimodal English-Indonesia video clips with subtitles?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Media

Regarding the importance of ICT, Goodwin et al. (2015) maintained that “the perceived importance of ICT is the extent to which teachers believe that the integration of ICT for teaching-learning is important.” Similarly, as confirmed by Mulyani et al. (2021), digital media nowadays have become a central component as the backup apparatuses for effective teaching-learning processes. Therefore, implementing the

online learning process requires the English teachers as facilitators to find learning resources to help EFL (English as a foreign language) students achieve learning goals effectively and efficiently understand the teaching and learning materials. Additionally, online learning is expected to better facilitate the awareness and activeness of EFL students in their language learning instruction either in synchronous (i.e., the use of an online platform like Zoom, Google Meet, among others) or asynchronous (i.e., discussion forum via Learning Management System (LMS), group chat, among others) mode (Amin & Sundari, 2020).

One of the virtual learning media in English that is deemed effective is video learning, such as creating educational videos through YouTube that supports students to learn online independently (Silviyanti, 2014; Simbolon & Febrianti, 2020). Despite being delivered in a one-way communication style, the YouTube learning videos enable EFL students to directly see and hear explanations of the learning materials. Nevertheless, not all EFL teachers have the initiatives and skills to develop learning materials through videos. Be that as it may, many good English learning video clips are available on YouTube that teachers can choose as learning resources for their students. In line with this, Silviyanti (2014) found that the usage of YouTube media is stimulating and advantageous for EFL students. They excite students to watch movie videos and assist in practicing and pronouncing English words/phrases. These learning videos are available with or without

subtitles to viewers. Likewise, Akbulut (2007) ascertained that combining text with visuals is more effective in facilitating vocabulary learning than just providing word definitions. Similarly, Çakir (2006) has noticed that foreign language learners rely on visual signs or media to support and enhance their language understanding.

### **Video Subtitle for EFL Instruction**

In Indonesia's educational curriculum, EFL students of higher education should master all English skills that comprise listening, reading, speaking, and writing. To do so, mastering English is essential because a robust vocabulary improves all areas of communication that unquestionably include these four skills. Studies in vocabulary acquisition revealed that acquiring words requires several interactions with words in different forms (Nation, 1990; Schmidt, 2001). Furthermore, Frantzen (2003) specified that beginner vocabulary learners derive meaning from context.

As revealed by Katemba (2019), Indonesian students frequently struggle with vocabulary when studying English since it differs from the Indonesian language in structure, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Based on the result of the pre-research conducted by Sariakin et al. (2021), in the Acehese classroom context, especially in suburban areas, the student's command of the English language was poor. It transpired because the students had difficulty acquiring vocabularies, such as difficulty recognizing and remembering the meaning of the words, employing the vocabulary in discourse or

sentences, and spelling and pronunciation. For many Indonesian students, English remains a complex subject. As a result, a range of learning approaches must be used to maximize their chances of learning new words. The method is to expose children to a large amount of L2 input, which will aid in vocabulary development (Damanik & Katemba, 2021).

Accordingly, there are ways to enhance EFL students' vocabulary, and among them is the use of media such as realia, pictures, games, videos, and online media, among others. For example, YouTube provides many English video clips for students to learn vocabulary. Moreover, films and videos are practical ways to motivate and assist students in understanding language (Baltova, 1999; Ismail, 2017; Zanón, 2007). Similarly, Donaghy (2014) asserted that learning through films/videos is encouraging and fun. Thus, learning vocabulary through digital media may enhance and accelerate students' ability to master English vocabulary.

Concerning its effectiveness, Harmer (2007) stated that "just like the video, filmed extracts can be used as the main focus of a lesson sequence or parts of other longer sequences either to watch a whole film or a short two-or three-minute sequence." Watching English films or video clips, which are cut based on the need from a complete film, must be conducted repeatedly by the EFL students to ease vocabulary retention. As stated by Etemadi (2012), students who watch films with subtitles twice or more can progress in vocabulary learning, including

better recognition of words, expressions, and idioms. In order to create an effective English language learning of vocabulary using films, film clips, or film extracts, language teachers are required to confidently provide them with an efficient, precise, and specific time. Good content of the video clips is to be learned since nowadays, they have complete access to watch any video clips on the internet through sites like YouTube and others.

Moreover, related to its advantages, through films or videos, students may study contextually in which they may acquire the English vocabulary efficiently and effectively as films provide many daily life phrases and dialogues based on the context, such as friendship, life challenges, love, history, and war, among others. More specifically, Harmer (2013) asserted that there are several benefits to encouraging students to watch while they listen, such as they may see whole paralinguistic behaviors (i.e., matching of intonation with facial expressions, gestures with specific phrases or expressions and picking up many of cross-culture signs, among others). Likewise, as confirmed by Seferoğlu (2008), films support the process of language learning because films present conversations that provide contextual vocabulary. Hence, through watching films, apart from acquiring new vocabulary, students may learn certain English vocabulary of real-life situations based on the context displayed.

Regarding the use of subtitles in movies, it is usually displayed as written text in the form of translation or original dialogue on

the bottom of a movie screen. Ruling out the notion that subtitles are a distraction and that reading subtitles is due to laziness, Díaz-Cintas (2003) noted otherwise. He believed that the human eye needs time and effort to read the captions without missing visual information (Zanón, 2006). Furthermore, the subtitling techniques used by professionals have a series of rules as regards the rapport between the time each subtitle remains on the screen and the number of characters it can contain (Díaz-Cintas, 2003). Consequently, viewers can read and understand what the actors talked about contextually. Therefore, using video clips with subtitles from YouTube videos, English vocabulary learning is very helpful in implementing integrated skill-based learning. Subtitles could contextually enhance students' understanding of English expressions and assist them in acquiring new English words and idioms (Halimah et al., 2021; Kanellopoulou, 2019; King, 2002; Negi & Mitra, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022; Taka, 2021). Likewise, Zanón (2006) asserted that the text assists most students in monitoring the words or sentences from the dialogue that might disappear. In addition, using video clips with subtitles from the YouTube in vocabulary online learning has many advantages. Among them is clearer and more interesting learning; the learning process is more efficient and effective because the students can repeat the words as often as needed. It may improve the quality of learning outcomes and overcome the limitations of space and time between the teachers and the students.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Participants**

The participants of this present study are 78 female EFL students studying at private Islamic senior high schools in Aceh Province, Indonesia. The samples were selected purposively based on these criteria: the schools are Islamic-based boarding schools situated in suburban areas. These schools require the students to speak two languages, English and Arabic. It is a good background for the student's English vocabulary learning habits. In addition, these schools still implement conventional teaching methods for English instruction. The schools also have technology-integrated learning facilities such as multimedia and language laboratory. The samples are homogenous in that they are all female students, as we do not focus on gender differences. Further, ten participants took part in the interview in this study. They were chosen based on voluntary sampling, as they offered their consent and availability to be interviewed.

### **Instruments**

This study utilized a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide to obtain the EFL students' responses on using prototype bimodal English-Indonesia video clips with subtitles in learning vocabulary. The questionnaire was written in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate the student's understanding of the items inquired. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements on a 4-point Likert Scale, on a scale of 1

(Strongly Disagree/SD), 2 (Disagree/D), 3 (Agree/A), to 4 (Strongly Agree/SA). The questionnaire used here was modified from a survey designed by Katemba and Ning (2018) to fit the research question posed in the present study. The questionnaire contained a set of questions on four aspects: (1) student's opinions on vocabulary learning difficulty (item 1), (2) their interests in the use of video clips with subtitles (items 2–3), (3) their opinions on learning activities using video clips with subtitles (item 5), and (5) their opinions on benefits of the use of video clips with subtitles (item 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (see Appendix 1 for the original questionnaire in Indonesian). These aspects used to be the themes to guide the results of this study.

The questionnaire statements were initially checked for face validation by two subject matter experts who are lecturers and researchers in English language teaching from two universities in Banda Aceh. The subject matter experts made suggestions and corrections to the questionnaire before it was distributed to the participants, who had been taught English vocabulary using video clips and subtitles in a study by Mulyani and Chaira (2021). The questionnaire was then tested for its internal consistency reliability, obtaining an acceptable degree of reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .770$ ).

The interview guide consisted of some probing questions that further explored the participants' responses to the questionnaire concerning the use of video clips with subtitles. The purpose of the interview was to support, validate, and triangulate the data (Creswell, 2012) from the questionnaire.

## Procedures

Before conducting the study, approval was obtained from the respective schools and informed consent from the participants. The participants were all females as they studied in Islamic boarding schools. However, as shown in their report cards, they had varied English competencies and pursued different majors (i.e., social sciences and natural sciences). This present study was also a continuation of the study conducted by Mulyani and Chaira (2021). Thus, the participants had the treatment of having English vocabulary instruction using video clips with English-Indonesian subtitles. The study was conducted in Islamic private schools in Aceh using a quasi-experiment. The study was conducted in two days: in the first week and second week of August 2020. The students were given a pre-test and first treatment on the first day, while the second treatment and post-test were on the next schedule of the English subject (i.e., the following week). The pre-test and post-test were arranged in an online written version for students.

Similarly, the research treatment consisting of two sessions was conducted virtually using Google Meet due to COVID-19 restrictions. In the first treatment, after a brief explanation of the vocabulary learning instruction given by the researchers, the students were directed to watch prototype video clips with subtitles (i.e., movie clips of *Venom*). In contrast, in the second treatment, they were directed to watch other prototype video clips (i.e., movie clips of *Maleficent*). Both treatments

applied five steps of activities to conduct the vocabulary learning instruction (see the Introduction section). The test assessment included meaning, synonym, antonym, and phrase in multiple-choice, matching items, finding scramble words, and filling in the gaps. The administration of the tests (i.e., students' works) was uploaded through Google Classroom, arranged by the assigned teacher, which then permitted the researcher to access and manage it independently for the need of the study.

In this study, the questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms as we could not meet the participants in person due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Google link was sent to the school teachers before being forwarded to the participants. In the questionnaire, the participants were first given instructions on how to rate the level of agreement on the statements exhibited in the questionnaire on a scale of 1 (SD) to 4 (SA).

In addition, the interview was also carried out online with ten participants through WhatsApp. Each participant had an approximately 15 minutes interview conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ease the participant in comprehending and responding to the questions properly. The interview responses were recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

### Data Analysis

This study employed the SPSS software to process the descriptive statistics of the quantitative data. The results were then tabulated based on the aspects of the statements in the questionnaire. As for the

qualitative data, thematic analysis was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014). First, the interview data were transcribed and translated from Bahasa Indonesia to English. Afterward, the data were coded and classified into specific categories based on the common emerging themes from the interview responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). For example, participants for the interview were labeled P1–P10 (Participant 1–Participant 10).

## RESULTS

The following section presents the questionnaire results, as shown in Table 1. Further, the interview results are also reported to support the findings in the questionnaire. Finally, the results are discussed in five themes according to the emerging themes obtained. They are students' opinions on vocabulary learning difficulty, students' interests in using video clips with subtitles, students' opinions on learning activities using video clips with subtitles, students' opinions on the advantages of using video clips with subtitles, and students' opinions on its setbacks.

### Students' Opinions on Vocabulary Learning Difficulty

As seen in Table 1, the participants generally encountered difficulty acquiring new English vocabulary (Mean = 2.59; SD = .653). However, this finding suggests that although some students had difficulties acquiring new English words, others shared a different view. Nevertheless, as revealed by Katemba (2019), Indonesian students frequently

Table 1

*Students' responses to the application of video clips with subtitles for English vocabulary instruction*

No	Statement	Responses (%)				Mean	Std. Deviation
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	I experience difficulties in acquiring new English vocabulary	5.1	48.7	43.6	2.6	2.59	.653
2	I am interested in learning English using the prototype of video clips with subtitles	64.1	33.3	1.3	1.3	3.56	.594
3	I am attentive to learning English through the media (prototype) of video clips with subtitles because it is interesting and not monotonous, which motivates me to improve my new vocabulary	52.6	42.3	3.8	1.3	3.46	.638
4	Another benefit that I get in learning English vocabulary through video clips is that I can directly imitate the vocabulary of native speakers and gain new experiences in learning	61.5	37.2	1.3	0	3.56	.524
5	The activities in the English instruction through movie clips with subtitles are highly enjoyable and interesting	52.6	47.8	0	0	3.58	.497
6	I can easily understand the English vocabulary that is taught through the video clips because the appeared text is available in two subtitles	65.4	33.3	1.3	0	3.68	.497
7	Watching video clips repeatedly can assist me in memorizing English vocabulary faster	67.9	30.8	0	1.3	3.63	.584
8	Learning vocabulary through the video clips helped me understand English vocabulary precisely and correctly based on its context	48.7	48.7	2.6	0	3.45	.573
9	Video clips are one of the best and most effective media for improving students' English vocabulary acquisition	50	48.7	1.3	0	3.45	.550



Table 1 (Continue)

No	Statement	Responses (%)				Mean	Std. Deviation
		SA	A	D	SD		
10	I can feel my development is better than before in mastering English vocabulary through the (prototype) video clip	47.4	50	1.3	1.3	3.37	.605

struggle with vocabulary when studying English since it differs from the Indonesian language in structure, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Furthermore, several excerpts from the interviews also showed similar results to the questionnaire, as shown below:

(P3): “No, I don’t have difficulty.»

(P5): “Yes, ah, I have difficulty in adding new vocabulary.”

The findings also concur with previous studies, which found that EFL students faced many setbacks in learning new English vocabulary (Afzal, 2019; Rohmatillah, 2014; Salam & Nurnisa, 2021).

### Student’s Interests in the Use of Video Clips with Subtitles

Table 1 shows that most participants had positive attitudes toward the use of video clips, as seen in item 2, which stated, “I am really interested in learning English using the prototype video clips with subtitles” (Mean = 3.56; SD = .594), and on item 3 “I am attentive in learning English through the prototype video clips with subtitles because it is interesting and not monotonous, which motivates me in improving my new vocabulary” (Mean = 3.46; SD = .638).

(P1): “Oh, definitely. I’m really interested in it.”

(P5): “Yes, I’m interested in it. The reason I’m interested because there [through the media] we understand fast, what is... the vocabulary is mentioned [pronounced] clearly, [so] we do not incorrectly pronounce the vocabulary.”

(P6): “Here, we rarely use media in learning, so when there are media used [in teaching], we will focus on it, and we’ll be triggered to memorize the vocabulary.”

(P9): “Yes, I’m very interested in it because it’s much easier, easier to memorize the vocabulary.”

Such findings denote that the students were highly interested in learning English using the prototype of video clips with subtitles, perhaps due to the novelty this media brought them (Mulyani & Chaira, 2021). The findings also confirm with Donaghy (2014) that learning through films is encouraging and fun because it is not monotonous.

### Students' Opinions on Learning Activity Using Video Clips with Subtitles

All participants provided positive responses on learning English vocabulary with subtitled videos, as shown in item 5 "The activities in the English instruction through movie clips with subtitles are highly enjoyable and interesting" (Mean = 3.58; SD = .497).

(P4): "Yes, if we can understand more by using steps. First, it has text [subtitles], then it doesn't provide text [subtitles], etc."

(P7): "Yes, because it is prepared step-by-step."

The results of this study corroborate those in other studies that learning languages through films are encouraging and fun (Donaghy, 2014; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999; Zanón, 2006). Moreover, the steps made in the vocabulary learning activities using prototype bimodal English-Indonesia video clips by Mulyani and Chaira (2021) enabled them time to watch, focus, note down the vocabulary, and remember and recall the words while learning.

### Students' Opinions on the Advantages of Using Video Clips with Subtitles

In terms of the advantages, the participants generally agreed that learning English words through video clips with subtitles helped them to imitate and pronounce the words directly (item 4; Mean = 3.56; SD = .524), understand the words easily (item 6; Mean = 3.68; SD = .497), memorize the words

quickly (item 7; Mean = 3.63; SD = .584), understand the words precisely and correctly (item 8; Mean = 3.45; SD = .573), improve the acquisition of the words effectively (item 9; Mean = 3.45; SD = .550), and develop the mastery of new words properly (item 10; Mean = 3.37; SD = .605).

The study also revealed why the participants believed that subtitled video clips are beneficial in English vocabulary learning, including influences of facial expressions and gestures, correct pronunciation, the context of the words, and repeated scenes in the video clips. Some responses are provided in the following.

(P3): "Yes, because besides we listen to the actors, we can also see what they said and understand through their faces and gestures. We can listen to it while seeing the text (subtitles) below the screen."

(P6): "When we directly watch the video/film while we're listening to the words, its pronunciation, consequently, it eases us to master the English language."

(P7): "The languages (i.e., vocabulary) we rarely use are available in the video clips, so that it will be very helpful."

(P10): "If we watch repeatedly, we will understand it fast. For example, the vocabulary will be memorized more easily."

These findings are in line with Harmer (2013), who pointed out several benefits that can encourage students to watch

while they listen because by doing so, they can match intonation with facial expressions, gestures with certain phrases or expressions, and pick up cross-culture signs while viewing the videos. Likewise, Silviyanti's (2014) research also found that watching videos (i.e., through YouTube) was stimulating and advantageous for EFL students as it supported them in practicing and pronouncing words/phrases as uttered by native English speakers. On the other hand, a recent study by Zheng et al. (2022) showed that subtitles enabled comprehension while videos only did not. Additionally, they found that the ability of the participants to comprehend audio lectures with videos was determined by their cognitive capacities and eye movement patterns.

### **Students' Opinions on Hindrances of Using Video Clips with Subtitles**

In hindrances to learning English vocabulary through subtitled video clips, this study found that a small proportion of the participants believed this learning method was not interesting enough (item 3; 3.8% disagreed; 1.3% strongly disagreed). Moreover, some could not imitate the words spoken by native speakers nor gain novel experiences in learning through subtitled videos (item 4; 1.3% disagreed), and also could not fully understand the appearing subtitles in the videos (item 6, 1.3% disagreed). Therefore, the participants were further probed in the interview to examine the underlying factors that caused the obstacles.

Several issues emerged during English vocabulary learning using subtitled

videos. First, the study revealed that the participants had trouble with poor use of the elements of the subtitles, such as color, font size, and duration. Further, despite some beneficial aspects gained by having subtitles in videos for learning English, the participants admitted that being too focused on reading the subtitles distracted them from trying to understand the contextual uses of the vocabulary. It is an aspect of 'toxic positivity' of using subtitles when students learn English vocabulary. Having subtitles in videos can help English learners to acquire English words properly. However, at the same time, learners will be too reliant on the subtitles and less attentive to the content and authentic use of the English language.

Nevertheless, the fast duration of the subtitles will not necessarily affect learners' comprehension even for the type of interlingual subtitling (i.e., English-to-Indonesian). However, it may cause an issue, particularly for those with a lower level of English competence (Szarkowska et al., 2016). In addition, the choice of color and font size is also a factor that may hinder English learners from appropriately reading what is written in the videos if subtitles' colors and font sizes are too small or too bright, eventually diverting the learners' focus.

Below are some excerpts from the interview.

(P2): *"In my opinion, the duration of subtitles is a little bit fast, sometimes I have to read it quickly; so, I don't know [the meaning]."*

(P5): “...*the color of the subtitles is clear, but it’s yellow. It makes my eyes difficult to see.*”

(P9): “...*the font of subtitles is a little bit small; so, I need to sit in the front to see them clearly. ... the drawback [of the subtitled videos] is the audience will be too focused on the subtitles and will have no initiative to understand the characters’ speaking....*»

Regarding the visual-textual information, the complexity of the video, and the language use, Van der Zee et al. (2017) described that the complexity of the video and students’ language proficiency considerably impact students’ learning outcomes. Therefore, customizing the font, color, size, placement, and style of the subtitles to suit the student’s needs would be effective if teachers decided to use this mode of learning in the classroom, as these features greatly assist students in learning through video clips (Davis, 2021).

## DISCUSSION

The study results indicate that providing video subtitles contributes to the ease of learning English vocabulary. Studies, such as by Akbulut (2007), Gomathi et al. (2017), and Zanón (2006), also underpinned the verity that combining text with visuals is more effective in facilitating vocabulary learning than merely providing word definitions. Consequently, the text subtitles, or the captions, assist learners in remembering and recalling expressions or words. Images, whether contextualized in videos or on

their own, can aid in reinforcing language learning (Crosthwaite et al., 2021; Zanón, 2006). As such, language learners can see immediate meaning in terms of vocabulary recognition because one of the best ways to ensure this immediacy of meaning is through subtitles (Canning-Wilson, 2000; Kanellopoulou, 2019). Using video clips with subtitles to teach vocabulary, students learn through visualization (Sunubi & Rustam, 2020; Teng, 2022). Thus, subtitled media is believed to be more effective than conventional methods like providing written definitions on a blackboard or in a book (Canning-Wilson, 2000; Halimah et al., 2021; Negi & Mitra, 2022; Taka, 2021). In Indonesian classrooms, vocabulary instruction mostly uses conventional methods, such as providing word meanings directly, and the media/techniques are not interesting (Wahyuni & Yulaida, 2014).

In addition, the findings of this study also support the notion that students who learn a language by repeatedly (but not excessively) watching the same film with subtitles can boost their ability to understand new vocabulary and further recognize and learn new expressions in the language being learned (Chen et al., 2022; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999; Tsai, 2022; Etemadi, 2012;). Films also support language learning by presenting conversations that provide contextual vocabulary (Lin & Chen, 2007). Apart from these statements, this study conforms to King’s (2002) study that subtitles could contextually enhance students’ understanding of English expressions and assist them in acquiring new

English words and idioms. It exposes that vocabulary learning through the media of video clips with subtitles supports students in understanding the English vocabulary according to different contexts in which the words are utilized. Language learning following the context can accommodate students to obtain appropriate vocabulary/phrases. In other words, students can better identify and comprehend how certain phrases and vocabulary are used in certain contexts. Additionally, to facilitate students' achievement in online learning, Van der Zee et al. (2017) also confirmed that when it comes to open online education, the availability and accessibility of courses should be structured to reduce the negative consequences of a language barrier, for example, by offering subtitles. In improving language comprehension in online learning, students are likely to be affected by videos without subtitles; hence, the unfavorable effects could be decreased by providing subtitles.

The study by Putra (2014), Gomathi et al. (2017), Oladunjoye (2017), and Reynolds et al. (2022) also found that the ability of students improved after watching films with subtitles. To conclude, the EFL students felt the development of their ability to master English vocabulary through the prototype video clips with subtitles better than before. In addition, the questionnaire and the interview results also indicated that most students thought positively about using video clips with subtitles in English vocabulary instruction. It is evidenced by the high proportions of 'strongly

agree' and 'agree' responses in all item statements regarding students' opinions, interests, learning activities, and benefits. Furthermore, from the interview results, the students showed highly positive attitudes toward learning English vocabulary through video clips with subtitles.

Nevertheless, apart from advantages, the findings from the interview also shared a few setbacks in terms of the speed of the subtitles being shown on screen, which the students deemed to be fast. Additionally, some students responded that they have problems with color, font, and size in subtitles. For example, the colors of the subtitles (i.e., yellow and red) were considered unclear as they blurred the students' eyesight. Additionally, the font size selection for the subtitles was not readable enough, which made the video's visual-textual information complexity and the subtitles' language use a bit difficult to understand. Therefore, modifying the font, color, size, placement, and style of the subtitles to meet the demands of the students would be useful if teachers decided to employ this way of learning in the classroom because these aspects considerably benefit students in the learning process through video clips (Davis, 2021).

Hence, the study by Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón (2018) and Kruger et al. (2022) revealed opposing findings that most viewers of their participants could also read the subtitles and follow images. They did so even when the subtitle rates were fast. They further asserted that slow subtitles, especially in English video clips, caused

greater aggravation and less enjoyment because they required re-reading. Again, these differences may be due to the different proficiency levels between the study respondents compared to this current one. Their study had Polish and Spanish viewers aged 19–42. In contrast, this current study involved senior high school EFL learners aged 17 in Indonesia. It is believed that the difference in age makes a significant impact in terms of recollective experience in learning and proficiency.

Therefore, for ELF learners, teachers must consider the size, color, font, and speed of the subtitles shown on screen to avoid students having problems reading them. If customizing the subtitles' font, color, size, placement, and style is deemed necessary (Davis, 2021). Therefore, teachers should make a move to produce a rich video experience and obtain an effective learning outcome. Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón (2018) likewise noted that data transmission speed does not remain consistent across countries or even within corporations; it varies greatly. Regarding the colors of the subtitles, it is recommended that bright font colors with dark backgrounds and white or yellow colors be used in video subtitles, as legibility is the most important factor to consider when choosing a font for subtitles. Hence, a combination of bright colors and dark backgrounds is ideal. In terms of the font selection for subtitles, viewers will have no trouble reading the text if the subtitle font is chosen correctly.

This study also shares the implication of these findings for EFL teachers, where

they should use digital media applications in EFL classrooms. It will be helpful to utilize the media as the exclusive learning resource in improving any other skills of English, i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and reading, in an integrated approach. It is also recommended to implement video clips with subtitles of English-Indonesia and English versions in the virtual or blended learning settings, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic still occurs.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study revealed that most students gave positive responses and approximately one-fourth of students shared negative responses towards using prototype bimodal English-Indonesia video clips with subtitles in the English vocabulary instruction. It was indicated by the high percentages, mainly in students' interest, learning activity, and the benefits of using this prototype media. Meanwhile, the percentage is also moderately high in a few aspects, particularly the speed, colors, selection of font and its size and video complexity, and language use. Therefore, using digital media in learning English has been highly recommended by EFL language teachers in Indonesia or other developing countries to support either virtual learning or the blended learning system with the Learning Management System (LMS). These systems are now widely conducted in many educational institutions in other parts of the world because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the government and educational institutions are directed

to widely facilitate the EFL teachers in related webinars and workshops regarding their awareness and proficiency of learning resources and materials to enable them to master the digital media application, either software or hardware. By doing so, it is expected that the EFL students' achievement and progress in their learning are developed and boosted effectively by the virtuous and precise assistance and guidance of their EFL teachers. Thus, in this study, the findings provide empirical reasoning for reconsidering present subtitling procedures to assist students in digesting subtitled movies in a more well-organized manner.

Although this pilot study has answered the research question, it has three limitations. First, a limited number of participants in online setting classes might cause biased perceptions. Therefore, further studies are highly recommended in face-to-face learning or blended learning to cope with the pandemic situation and to employ Research and Development (R&D) design using any possible and precise models related to a learning prototype media. Second, this study had participants from an all-girls school, so the findings cannot be generated for a more comprehensive range of students. Consequently, the use of heterogender samples and a broader range of participants from urban, suburban, and remote areas are highly recommended to be involved in future research. Third, the study was not supported by other research instruments, such as observation sheets, that may enhance the reliability of English vocabulary instruction studies using the

prototype bimodal English-Indonesia video clip with subtitles in the virtual setting. Hence, it is hoped that future research may employ other possible research instruments to support and enhance the findings related to this study.

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## Appendix 1

Isilah kuesioner ini dengan sebenar-benarnya. Terima kasih banyak atas bantuannya.

Nama:

Kelas:

No	Statement	Respon			
1.	Selama ini saya mengalami kesulitan dalam menambah vocabulary (kosa kata) baru dalam bahasa Ingg	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
2.	Saya sangat tertarik belajar bahasa Inggris menggunakan media video klip film.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
3.	Saya tertarik belajar bahasa Inggris melalui media video klip film (prototype) karena medianya menarik dan tidak monoton sehingga memotivasi saya dalam meningkatkan kosa kata baru saya.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
4.	Manfaat lain yang saya peroleh dalam pembelajaran kosa kata bahasa Inggris melalui media video klip film adalah dapat meniru langsung pengucapan kosa kata bahasa penutur aslinya dan memperoleh pengalaman baru dalam belajar.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
5.	Aktifitas-aktifitas dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris melalui media video klip film sangat menyenangkan dan menarik.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju

No	Statement	Respon			
6.	Saya dapat memahami dengan mudah kosakata dalam bahasa Inggris melalui media video klip film karena tersedia dalam 2 subtitle bahasa; Inggris & Indonesia.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
7.	Menonton video klip film secara berulang-ulang dapat membantu saya dalam mengingat kosa kata bahasa Inggris dengan lebih cepat.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
8.	Pembelajaran vocabulary melalui media video klip film sangat membantu saya dalam memahami kosa kata bahasa Inggris sesuai dengan konteksnya secara tepat dan benar.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
9.	Media video klip film adalah salah satu media yang sangat bagus dan efektif untuk meningkatkan kosa kata bahasa Inggris saya.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju
10.	Saya merasakan perkembangan kemampuan saya dalam penguasaan kosa kata bahasa Inggris melalui media video klip film lebih baik dari sebelumnya.	Sangat setuju	Setuju	Tidak setuju	Sangat tidak setuju



## **A Socio-Cultural Study of Face and Politeness Conceptions in the Kazakh Context**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the issues related to some aspects of the Kazakh concept of face and politeness, the perceptions of politeness, and politeness and impoliteness strategies. The principal means and mechanism guide and predetermines the social conduct that guarantees the harmony of the relationships between people. Kazakh politeness, as part of people's communicative behavior, is a component of national culture and is governed by national customs and traditions based on deep historical roots. Historically nomadic, the Kazakhs had to develop a pattern of interaction rules within the community and outside that helped them to adapt successfully to the harsh conditions of the steppe. The only guarantee to successfully survive in the vast steppe, arid nature, and nomadic way of life was to maintain benevolent relations between people and, at any expense, prevent conflict and aggressive situations. An online survey was conducted in which 100 first-year

al-Farabi university students participated. The survey data obtained provided valuable insight into the young people's beliefs about politeness and impoliteness and how the concept of politeness affects their moral values and shapes their ethnocultural behavior in modern times. The respondents' answers showed a surprising uniformity in defining the politeness principles in the Kazakh context. With Kazakh young people, politeness is nestled in respecting others,

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especially older adults, appropriate behavior, maintaining smooth and harmonious interpersonal relations, good manners, and adhering to societal rules and norms.

*Keywords:* behavior, communicative, face, harmony, im/politeness, interaction, socio-cultural, strategies, survival

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## INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is an inalienable part of people's everyday life and permeates all fields of human interaction and activities. The increased interest in studying this phenomenon on the part of representatives of different fields of knowledge indicates the importance of this issue in human relationships. From the 1970s to the present day, this topic remains a major focus for research in disciplines concerned with social interaction, such as psychology, ethnopsychology, cultural studies, anthropology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and communication, among others. Since politeness is basic to the production of social order and a precondition of human cooperation, any theory that provides an understanding of this phenomenon simultaneously goes to the foundations of human social life (Brown & Levinson, 2009; 1987; Brown & Gilman, 1989).

What is politeness? A multitude of answers has been proposed to this question. As was pointed out by Bargiela-Chiappini (2003), although a variety of studies have

been done, "this field still lacks an agreed definition of what politeness is" (Bargiela-Chiappini (2003, p. 1469). It is an expected truth since politeness is a form of human relationship that people try to establish to *live comfortably together*. It is known that human relationship is one of the most complicated puzzles of human life.

While defining what politeness is, authors mainly concentrate on the pragmatic view of politeness principles: "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (Leech, 2007, pp. 167–206), "a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse—both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening." (Lakoff, 1990), "nationally specific strategies of behavior aimed at harmonious, conflict-free communication and meeting the expectations of the partner" (Larina, 2015), "a means of expressing consideration for others" (Holmes, 2006), "choosing many different kinds: what we want to say, how we want to say it, and the specific sentence types, words, and sounds that best unite the what with the how. How we say something is at least as important as what we say, in fact, the content and the form are inseparable, being but two facets of the same object" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 260).

Today, there are several approaches to the study of various aspects of the category of politeness: politeness as a social norm; politeness as speech maxims and



rules (Lakoff 1973, 1990; Leech, 2007); politeness as “saving face” (Goffman, 1955; Brown & Levinson, 2009; 1987); socio-cultural approach (Fraser, 2005); politeness as tact (Janney & Arndt, 1993; Richard et al., 1992); politeness as an ethical and pragmalinguistic category (Formanovskaya, 1998); among others.

From our point of view, the socio-cultural approach to politeness deserves special attention, emphasizing social norms. Each society has a particular set of socially accepted norms containing clear-cut rules that prescribe a certain behavior its members should follow in different social contexts (Fraser, 2005). When an individual chooses the behavior following the norm, his behavior is considered polite. On the other hand, if his behavior is contrary to the norm, then he shows rude behavior, which is qualified as “shameless” according to Kazakh mentality. In this sense, politeness is synonymous with good manners,” “social etiquette,” and “considerate behavior” (Muldagaliyeva et al., 2015, pp. 33–84).

The big interest is also the consideration of politeness from the perspective of saving face, introduced by Goffman (2017) and Brown and Levinson (2009). The concept of face, a fundamental concept in sociolinguistics, was first suggested by Erving Goffman in his article “On Face-work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements of Social Interaction” and in his book “Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior.” Brown and Levinson (2009) further developed the idea of the face. They argue that this concept is universal.

Indeed, in Kazakh, there is the word “*bet*” (face), “*bet +syz*” (lit. *having no face* or utterly impolite, rude, shameless), or “*Kai betingmen kelip tursyn?*” (lit. *aren't you ashamed to come or how could you come with such a face?*) In the communication process, participants are interested in preserving both one’s faces and his/her partners. At the same time, saving face is not the goal of communication, but a condition, without which normal communication is impossible. To fulfill this condition, as Goffman figuratively expressed, every member of society should learn to save face, like learning the traffic rules of social interaction (Goffman, 2017).

Brown and Levinson propose distinguishing between the “negative face” and “positive face” and emphasizing positive and negative politeness. By a negative face, they mean the desire of every adult person to have freedom of action, the inadmissibility of interference of others (they want to have freedom of action unhindered), that is, “the desire to be independent,” and under the positive “the desire to be desired” by others (the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others) (Brown & Levinson, 2009).

Positive politeness strategies minimize the threat to the communication participant’s positive face. In addition, these strategies create an atmosphere of friendship and mutual affection and are used when people know each other fairly well. These strategies include such language as compliments, joking, encouragement, and “white lies.”

Negative politeness involves respecting other people's privacy and emphasizes avoiding imposition on the communication participant. By attempting to avoid imposition from the speaker, the risk of facing a threat to the hearer is reduced. Negative politeness strategies are intended to avoid giving offense by showing deference. These strategies involve questioning, hedging, and presenting disagreement as opinions. If individual acts considering the rules of "positive politeness" and "negative politeness," then it can be expected that by being mutually supportive and avoiding threats to face, speakers can always maintain smooth, peaceful, and non-conflict communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

There can hardly be found cultures that do not employ politeness norms. It is a universal category. However, here the question arises if the concept of "politeness" is fully equivalent in different languages since "the language itself is the door to a concept in people's minds" (Ide, 1982, 1989).

Leech (2007) also points out that it is premature to talk of universals of politeness, although the scales of value are widespread in human societies; their interpretation differs from society to society, just as encoding differs from language to language. Nevertheless, he suggests that this is the basis on which well-founded cross-cultural pragmatic research could proceed. The question to ask is, given these scales of value, what socio-cultural variants of them are found in particular cultures, and what pragmatic linguistic forms of language are used to encode these variants?

It is a common idea that what is polite in one society may be regarded as impolite in another. For example, addressing an older adult by his name is utterly rude in Kazakh culture. It is also not polite not to take off shoes when entering the house from the street or to interfere in the conversation when people are talking. On the other hand, it is polite to invite the guest to share lunch when the family is having a meal, and according to Kazakh customs, it is impolite if she/he refuses to do so. Instead, she/he should take a piece of bread and eat it (*auz tiu*). This custom is based on the idea "*Dammen ylken emessing*"—there is nothing more sacred than food, do not neglect the invitation.

The concept of face and politeness is, practically, an uncultivated area in the Kazakh language. Nevertheless, there are a few works on this topic. One of them is by Ryssaldy and Utepova (2018). In their paper "Lingo Cultural Peculiarities of Concept 'Politeness' in Kazakh and English Languages and its Influence on Forming Cross-Cultural Competence," the authors point out that English speakers pay great attention during communication to the plain of expression while Kazakh speakers to the plain of content. An important attribute of a polite person in the English language culture is the use of the words like "please" and "Thank you!". However, with Kazakhs, there are other indicators of politeness. They argue that these discrepancies should be taken into consideration in the process of teaching English to Kazakh students.

Aimoldina et al. (2015), in their paper “Polite Requests vs. Socio-Cultural Content in Kazakh, Russian and English Business Correspondence in Kazakhstan,” consider business correspondence in Kazakhstan. They claim that in business correspondence, it is necessary to consider the social characteristics of the data producers and recipients of the correspondence, which significantly reduces the possibility of discomfort or pragmatic communicative failures of business professionals in the context of different cultural and linguistic communities.

The authors believe it is important to thoroughly consider the particulars of the categories “face” and “politeness” in Kazakh culture. Therefore, the present paper aims to answer the following questions: What is the Kazakh national-specific conception of face? What is the Kazakhs’ understanding of politeness in communicative behavior in different contexts? How do Kazakh youth perceive the concept of politeness and politeness strategies?

### **Some Particulars of Kazakh National-Specific Conceptions of Face and Politeness**

#### **The Kazakh Concept of Face**

The face is one of the most significant parts of the human body. In the framework of politeness theory, it is used to represent the whole human being, including physical and non-physical aspects (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). Therefore, the concept of face is a very important aspect of Kazakh culture and behavior. Unfortunately, finding a

one-to-one translation of this concept in Kazakh is difficult. The Kazakh concept of face comprises combinations of personal traits depending on the individual and the context: good name, honor, a sense of dignity, reputation, pride, and self-esteem.

There are very interesting idioms and proverbs in the Kazakh language with the organ of the face that convey the idea of losing face by becoming ashamed, angry, or sad. For example, *Qara bet* (lit. *black face*), *kok bet* (lit. *blue face*—scandalous), *Betsyz* (lit. *having no face*—shameless), *betke basu* (lit. *to throw to the face*—to say an unpleasant truth to the face), *bety ashylgan* (lit. *face opened*—shameless about female, the truth discovered about an inadequate affair, business, crime), *betty zherge qaratu* (lit. *to look with one’s face down on the ground*—to be disgraced, discredited).

The examples show that the organ of the face in Kazakh is used in proverbs and idioms to indicate more negative emotions than positive ones. The face is used to describe the psychological states, feelings and emotions, and character and behavior of people. Thus, the face is emotionally invested, which can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. Although, in general, people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation is based on the mutual vulnerability of face. Normally everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s being maintained, and people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened and defend their own threatened others’

faces (Brown & Levison, 2009). The Kazakhs highly value their “face,” and throughout their life, they try hard to live up not to stain their faces.

The Kazakhs are very shame-sensitive people. The word “*Uiat*,” shame, is a “strong” and “heavy” word in the Kazakh language. The proverb “*Olimnen uiat kushty*” (lit. *shame is stronger than death*) proves this idea. *Uiat* is the measuring yardstick of correct and good actions and behavior. It is an internal ability of a person to evaluate his actions, measure his behavior following the moral norms accepted in society, and have a sense of moral responsibility for his deeds and actions in front of people. *Uiat*+*syz* (negative suffix)—*shameless is one of the most humiliating face threats*.

The common belief guides the Kazakh communication behavior among participants to save each other’s faces. Many Kazakhs are so sensitive to saving and losing face that they consider it very seriously. Kazakhs strive to maintain the face they have earned in different social situations. They highly value and are emotionally attached to their face, so they are comfortable and content with their life when their face is maintained; loss of face causes deep emotional injury, so in social interactions, Kazakhs try hard to cooperate by following the accepted norms of politeness strategies to not to lose their face since it is something that cannot be bought, sold or traded. It is something that must be gained and earned by the respect of the people. A person’s social standing is related to the identity

or image each person wants to claim in interactions, and face-work involves the set of strategies that persons use to maintain their face. There are the proverbs: “*Eger de zhaman soz estiging kelmese, zhaman soz aitpa*”—if you do not want to hear a hurtful word, then do not say it, and “*Soz suekten otedy*” (lit. *word pierces the bone*). These proverbs imply the following truth: **Word is powerful. Be careful with words!** A hurtful word is perceived as particularly painful, which is qualified as a serious face threat to Kazakh, for example, *Adamnyng betin zhyrtyp soileu* (lit. *to shame a man by tearing his face apart*) which literally means “*to throw wounding words at the man’s face*.” At the same time, being easily offended is considered not good. One of the most common Kazakh proverbs is “*Zhaksy adamnyn okpesi shay oramal kepkenshe*” (a good person’s grudge will go away faster than a thin handkerchief will dry).

In Kazakh culture, it is prescribed that every person should possess self-respect and dignity, and he/she is expected to save others’ feelings and faces. This idea is expressed in the Kazakh sayings “*Omir sholak, adam bir birine konak*” (lit. *life is short, and men are guests to this world and each other*) or “*Kamshynyng sabyndai kyska omir*” (life is as short as the handle of a whip). The sayings imply that life is short and temporary, and people should value and appreciate each other, maintain healthy, respectful, and polite relationships, not offend each other, and not give way to face-threatening acts so that not make each other’s life an unbearable business.

With Kazakhs, it is advisable never to make a person feel ashamed—lose face in the presence of others. It is considered an utterly unacceptable face-threatening act. This behavior on the part of the speaker is qualified as an absolute ruining of the reputation and authority of the hearer in the eyes of those who witness. Kazakhs will not stand the use of anger or a thunderous voice which is also an unacceptable behavior that means loss of face and may bring a terrible conflict. According to ancient Kazakh “unwritten” laws, no one had the right to “*til tizizu*” (hurt with a word, insult).

Kazakh culture is rich in traditions and customs that promote practicing positive politeness strategies. Observation of traditions and customs relates to the gatherings of people who know each other fairly well. The interaction is based on predominantly positive politeness strategies emphasizing intimacy, familiarity, solidarity, friendship, and good relationships. These are the situations when people avoid face-threatening acts. Having chosen a strategy that provides an appropriate opportunity for minimization of face risk, a person rationally chooses the linguistic (or extralinguistic) means to satisfy his strategic end.

### **The Kazakh Concept of Politeness**

Politeness is solely human property. The study of politeness issues is largely significant for it helps human beings better understand the world they are living in and the reality they are confronted with, as better understand how social members re(construct), realize, and represent their

social and personal identity. The issue of politeness is one of philosophy, one of human life philosophy. It should be one of the ultimate goals of politeness studies (Xie et al., 2005; Wei, 2010).

With Kazakhs, politeness is a broad and complex concept with many elements. Therefore, the consideration of the Kazakh concept of politeness will be more fundamental from the point of view of the theory of discernment-dominated and volition-dominated cultures (Hill & Burt, 1986; Hill et al., 1986).

The members of the discernment-dominated culture mainly build their interactions in the light of cultural norms in a way that the communication participants either directly follow culturally recommended patterns of behavior or at least observe the customs and traditions of the society. Following customs and traditions necessarily involves polite behavior. Moreover, in volition-dominated cultures, people enjoy more freedom in building their interactions; their behavior according to recommended patterns is limited (Kydyrbayeva et al., 2021).

Kazakh politeness, as part of people’s communicative behavior, is a component of their national culture and is governed by national customs and traditions based on deep historical roots. Historically nomadic, the Kazakhs had to develop a pattern of interaction rules within the community and outside that helped them to adapt successfully to the harsh conditions of the steppe. In accumulating social experience, they have generated the norms

of behavior, the rules of communication, and etiquette—everything that regulates the social life in each community. The only guarantee to successfully survive in the vast steppe, arid nature, and nomadic way of life was to maintain benevolent relations between people and, at any expense, prevent alienation from the community. People could maintain smooth relations and sustain successful communication by being mutually supportive, avoiding threats to face, and following politeness strategies. Politeness was socially prescribed. From time immemorial, the Kazakhs lived following the motto “*Tyrlyk byrlykte!*” (survival is easier when people are united!).

Politeness is a behavior chosen by an individual according to conventional cultural rules. Whatever the cost, the Kazakhs did their best to preserve peaceful relations between people, and today they do. One of the essential principles of their existence was and remained the avoidance of conflict and confrontation. This idea finds expression in the proverb “*Taspen urgandy aspen ur*” (lit. *if someone throws a stone at you, you throw food at him*).

Throughout history, the Kazakhs strove to preserve societal harmony and promote tolerance and respect among people (Aubakirova et al., 2016). Another important indicator of the Kazakh mentality is tolerance. Tolerance lies based on the Kazakh philosophical worldview and spirituality. Thanks to practicing tolerance, the Kazakhs maintain loyal, non-aggressive, benevolent relations between different people, social strata, and states. Tolerance

means understanding and acceptance of other ideas, thoughts, attitudes, emotional states, faith, actions, and traditions; it is an ability to show patience and politeness (Balpanov, et al., 2018). This phenomenal feature of Kazakh mentality helps ensure unity, solidarity, and peaceful life in Kazakhstan today.

During the Second World War, the Kazakh people peacefully welcomed many nations on their land, shared their bread and home with them, and treated them with kindness and warmth.

Kazakhs highly value “*aralasu*” (communication), which means living in peace and maintaining close communication and interaction with countrymen and representatives of other nations since, as Kazakhs say, “*Adamnyng kuni adammen*” (lit. *man is a man among people*), which implies that a person becomes a person in the process of interacting with other people when he learns social norms, cultural values, and behavior patterns in society and behaves in compliance with the norms applied in society. Therefore, Kazakhs are amazingly open to communication. “*Aralasu*” is maintaining respectful, polite, and friendly communications with relatives, friends, families, and neighbors, which is the meaning of life for Kazakhs. *Aralasu* lies are based on multiple customs, traditions, and rituals that serve a vital function in the life of Kazakhs. They bring order and harmony to life, unity, and solidarity. This special quality to successfully communicate with people has developed from the nomadic lifestyle (Nurysheva et al., 2019).

### **Kazakh Linguistic Routines of Politeness**

Politeness is a complex socio-cultural concept. Nevertheless, the fundamental principles of socio-cultural organization and its members' interpersonal relations are based on positive politeness strategies. Positive-politeness utterances are used as a metaphorical extension of intimacy to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent, even between strangers who perceive themselves, for the interaction, as somehow similar. For the same reason, positive politeness techniques are used as a social accelerator, where the speaker indicates that he wants to be closer' to the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Conversational interaction develops in continual tension between two general communicative needs: the need to communicate as efficiently as possible and the need to be polite. In this context, linguistic routines (greeting, parting, address terms) represent the tool of polite behavior that reduces the risk of facing threats. A polite norm guides the use of linguistic routines. Greetings, partings, and addressing people are ritualized behaviors that help people to establish and maintain social relationships; they also may be called linguistic routines of politeness (Laver, 1981).

### **Greeting and Parting**

Kazakhs have always given special attention to greeting and parting. Kazakhs say: "*Salemyng durys bolsyn*," (may your greeting always be benevolent and well-

wishing), and "*Salem- sozdyng anasy*" (greeting is the mother of a word).

Since greeting takes place at the opening of communication, it sets the overall tone for interpersonal exchange. It serves as a means of achieving the desired outcome and building a positive relationship with the participant of communication. Greetings are linguistic routines that form part of the repertoire of politeness and serve as means for initiating communication appropriately and establishing and maintaining positive social relationships (Liu, 2016).

Greeting at a meeting—"Amandasu"—in Kazakh culture is one of the most important traditions. "*Amandasu*" contains not only wishes for good health but also the main issue of health for the dwellers of the harsh nature of the steppe. This Kazakh tradition has not undergone any changes before, and since then, Kazakhs have switched to a sedentary lifestyle in the last century. Therefore, the Kazakh will first ask, "*Salemetsiz be?*" "*Amansyz ba?*" (lit. *are you in good health?*) Only after receiving a positive answer will they continue to communicate further.

Interestingly, the Kazakh greeting formulas are, at the same time, a question about the health and safety of the addressee. For example, the greeting "*Amansyz ba?*" (Are you healthy? Is everything right with you?), "*Aman-yesensiz be?*" (Hello! Are you healthy?), "*Esensizder me?*" (Hello! How are you?), and "*Sau-selemetsizder me?*" (Hello! How are you? Are you safe and healthy?). The words "*as aman-esen, sau*," besides the meaning "healthy," denote

safe, unharmed, unscathed by troubles, pandemics, and negative experiences, among others. Such a primary concern for health and safety stems directly from the nomadic nature of life, and people might not regularly see each other for a long time (Meirbekov et al., 2015).

A respectful attitude towards elders characterizes the Kazakh community. Children from an early age are taught to be considerate and helpful concerning parents and people of older age. Such an attitude could not but be reflected in the language. For example, the greeting formula: “*Salemet+siz be!*” (Hello—concerning an older person) and “*Salemet+siz+der me!*” (concerning the group of older adults). According to a Kazakh tradition, to the greetings of children and young people, older adults answer, “*Bakytty bol!*” (Be happy!), and *Zhasyng uzak bolsyn!* (May you live a long life!).

Kazakh formulas of parting and greeting are simultaneously a wish for health. For Example, “*Sau bolyngyz*” (Be healthy), “*Qosh, Sau bolyngyz*” (Goodbye, be healthy), “*Qoshbol*” (Stay well), “*Aman-Saubol*” (Be safe and healthy), and “*Aman-Sau bolyngng+z*” (Polite form of parting with an older adult). Usually, the second part of parting contains different expressions of wishes: “*Zholyngyz bolsyn*” (May your road be open), “*Koriskenshe kun zhaksy bolsyn*” (May the day be bright when we meet again), “*Salem ait*” (Best regards to everybody), “*Baqytty bolyngdar*” (Be happy), and “*Zholdaryng bolsyn*” (May your road be open).

## Terms of Address

Within a framework of the theory of politeness, terms of address are a vital linguistic mechanism by which a speaker’s attitude and his/her evaluation of the relationship toward the hearer are mirrored. In Kazakh culture, addressing people is a very important element of communication. A polite person tries to choose the right address term to make the addressee feel comfortable. Moreover, the choice of address term often indicates the level of the addresser’s positive politeness and the level and “quality” of his upbringing.

According to the norms of the Kazakh national politeness principle, the most widely used address term is a *kinship term* used to refer to relatives and non-relatives. Therefore, the appropriate choice of the address term sets the tone for interpersonal exchange and serves as a means of achieving the desired outcome and building a positive relationship with the addressee.

The whole society can become a big kinship community by using a kinship address; kinship address terms are powerful means of creating and sustaining solidarity among not only members of a kin community but the whole society of Kazakhs have developed complex and varied terms of address. Tables 1 and 2 describe the terms.

## Kazakh Hospitality

Without this unwritten but immutable law, for Kazakhs, it was impossible to survive in the steppe (Shadkam & Paltore, 2018). Every Kazakh family’s duty was to welcome a traveler, warm and feed



Table 1

*Terms for male non-kins*

Junior speaker-addresser	Senior speaker-addresser
<i>Ata</i> (grandfather): much older than the speaker	<i>Baury+m</i> ( <i>younger brother</i> lit. 'liver'): male, relatively younger than the speaker
<i>Aga/Aga+i</i> (older brother/male relative): relatively older than the speaker	<i>Ini+m/in+shek</i> ( <i>younger brother</i> ): male, much younger than the speaker
<i>Bratishka/bratan</i> (younger brother, borrowed from Russian): of the same age/younger than the speaker	<i>Bala+m/bala+kai</i> (son): the addressee is of the age of the speaker's children
<b>Note:</b> the suffix <i>-i</i> indicates remoteness or lack of kinship ties	<b>Note:</b> <i>-m</i> is a possessive suffix; <i>-shek</i> , <i>-kai</i> are diminutive suffixes

Table 2

*Terms for female non-kins*

Junior speaker	Senior speaker
<i>Azhe+I</i> (grandmother), <i>Apa</i> (older sister/female relative): addressee is much older than the speaker	<i>Singil+im</i> (younger sister, younger female relative): female addressee, younger than the female speaker
<i>Apa+I</i> , <i>Apke</i> (older sister/female relative): addressee is relatively older than the speaker	<i>Kyz+ym</i> (daughter): female, much younger than the speaker
<i>Tate</i> (a young female): addressee is older than the addresser.	<i>Karyndas</i> (younger sister, younger female relative): female, younger than the male speaker
<b>Note:</b> the suffix <i>-i</i> indicates remoteness or lack of kinship ties	<i>Im/ym</i> –possessive suffix

Note: the most widely used kinship terms in addressing non-kins are *Apai* and *Agai*

him politely and respectfully. Hospitality is a trait in the blood of every Kazakh, and it was strengthened by the belief that “*Qyryk bir konaktyng biri aiagy men qut alyp keledy*” (lit. *one out of forty guests will bring well-being/luck to home with their legs*). The word “*Qut*” in the Kazakh language means “*happiness*,” “*well-being*,” and “*goodness and prosperity*.” Guests may be of two categories “*kudai konak*” (God’s messenger) and “*arnaiy konak*” (special guests). No longer are

the Kazakhs nomads, but this wonderful tradition remains and is being passed from generation to generation because it strengthens harmony and solidarity among people. As a rule, guests and hosts gather at a festive table (*dastarkan*), a table full of food. People get pleasure from the meeting, exchanging news, talking, and relaxing. It is one of the ways to brighten up spirits and have fun with friends, relatives, and colleagues.

## METHODS

In this research, we used the descriptive analysis method of empirical data by considering the core principles of the Kazakh concept of face and politeness. Kazakh politeness is a behavior chosen by an individual following conventional cultural rules.

An important part of this research is the online survey conducted among 17–18 years old first-year Mathematical Faculty bachelor’s students of al-Farabi University, Almaty, Kazakhstan. The specific aims of the online survey are: (1) to find out what is the Kazakh young people’s understanding of the concept of politeness, (2) to determine the politeness strategies they use in everyday interaction, (3) and identify impolite behavior in their mind. The next step was to conduct the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey data.

Our decision to choose the 17–18 aged young people as respondents were substantiated by the idea that this is the stage

in life when life values and moral attitudes are developing. They have just left school, and most got out of parental care and are now entering the world of adults. Therefore, the online survey results will provide useful insights into young people’s ideas and traditional moral values. In addition, the survey data will demonstrate to what extent they have internalized the politeness norms and values of Kazakh society in the changing world. The online questions were emailed to 100 participants, 52% females and 48% males. All the participants are representatives of Kazakh nationality. The online survey included three questions (Tables 3 to 5): (1) What does politeness mean in your understanding? (2) What polite strategies do you use in everyday life? 3) What behavior is impolite, in your opinion?

## The Results of the Survey

Fortunately, all 100 respondents participated in the survey and sent exhaustive answers to all questions.

Table 3

*Types of responses to what does politeness mean in your understanding?*

Kazakh	English	%
<i>adepti, sylastyq, qurmet, kishipeil</i>	respect	78%
<i>tarbiely</i>	good upbringing	77%
<i>meirimdylik</i>	kindness, generosity	65%
<i>sabyrly/ustamdy</i>	balanced, self-control	38%
<i>qarapaim</i>	kind-hearted, modest	10%
<i>zhaksy minez</i>	good character	8%
<i>tartıptı</i>	disciplined, good behavior	7%
<i>adamgershilik</i>	humanness	3%
<i>madeniетtilik</i>	cultured, cultivated	3%

Table 4

*Types of responses: What polite strategies do you use in everyday life?*

Kazakh	English	%
<i>salem беру, amandasu</i>	greeting everyone appropriately	100%
<i>ata-anandy, zhakyndardy sylau</i>	respect parents and relatives	100%
<i>adamga karap esimin atau, asirese ulken kisining esimine "ata", "aga", "apa", degen sozderdi qosyp aitu</i>	addressing people, especially older adults, appropriately using kinship terms.	97%
<i>ulken kisige zhol беру</i>	to give way to an elderly person	83%
<i>konakzhai bolu</i>	show hospitality	78%
<i>adamdarmen qarym qatynasta zhaksy tartip korsetu</i>	to demonstrate good behavior and tactfulness in interaction with people	77%
<i>ulken adamnyng aldynan zholyn kesip otau</i>	not to cross the road in front of the elderly people	77%
<i>ulkenderding zhane aiel kisining syrtyk kiyimin sheshuge komektesu</i>	to help older adults and females to take their coats off	65%
<i>zhastarga izet korsetu</i>	to be a good example to young people, to be caring about the younger	56%
<i>adamdarga goldau qorsetu</i>	be supportive	53%
<i>komektesu</i>	being helpful	43%
<i>adamdardying kongiline qarau</i>	considering other people's feelings	38%
<i>adamdardy zyly shyraimen qarsy alu zhane zhaqsy qarym-qatynas ornatu</i>	to meet people with a genial and affable smile and maintain a benevolent relationship	35%
<i>zhagymdy/sypayisoileu</i>	speaking pleasantly	30%

Table 5

*Responses to: What behavior is impolite in your opinion?*

Kazakh	English
<i>ulkenderding sozin bolip soileu</i>	to interfere when older adults are talking
<i>ulkendermen qarsylasu</i>	to talk rudely to elderly people
<i>adamdy zhamandau, oseq tasu</i>	to speak negatively about somebody in public, spread gossip
<i>adamdarga mensinbeushilikpen karau zhane betin zhyrtyp soileu</i>	to speak to people tearing their faces up - to shame and humiliate somebody
<i>qasarysu</i>	to be stubborn about doing something
<i>adamdarga tesilip qarau</i>	shamelessly stare at somebody

Table 5 (Continue)

Kazakh	English
<i>bosip soileu, kop maqtanu</i>	to talk boastfully, always bragging about oneself
<i>adamdardyng zheke omiri turaly kop suraq qoiu</i>	putting too many private questions, breaking private boundaries
<i>uiatsyz anekdot aitu</i>	to tell a shameful anecdote in public
<i>adamdardy elemei qol silteu</i>	to insultingly wave one's hand down to somebody
<i>ulken adamnyng zholyng kesip otu</i>	to cross the road in front of an elderly person

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In a changing world, simple ‘norms and values’ are losing their significance in the pace of life. During the last 30 years, Kazakhstan has undergone considerable changes. Kazakhstan has transformed from a post-Soviet socialist country with a planned economy to a fast-developing democratic country with a market economy. The transformation period lasted for 10–15 years, and the collapse of Soviet ideals and overall stress in the moods and minds of people characterized this period.

It is well known that young people are very responsive to radical changes in society. Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (2007) point out that “if the social order has changed and if social structures have weakened, we would expect to find evidence of these changes among young who are at crossroads of the process of social reproduction.” The survey data provided valuable insight into the young people’s beliefs about politeness and impoliteness, their attitude to the phenomenon under study, and how the concept of politeness

affects their moral values and shapes their ethnocultural behavior in modern times.

Most Kazakh youth (78%) associate politeness with *respect, good breeding, kindness, and generosity*. Here we need to decipher the meaning of *respect* in Kazakh mentality. All three lexical units *sylastyq, qurmet, and kishipeil*—possess the meaning of *respect* in their semantic structure. Therefore, according to the respondent, politeness primarily involves respecting people, particularly respecting older adults and younger ones. This idea is expressed in the proverb “*Ulkenge kurmet, kishige izel*” (Respect for an elder and caring for a younger), which implies everyone should equally be respected and treated politely. The word “*sylastyq*” in the Kazakh language belongs to “deep, meaningful words.” There are a big number of proverbs and sayings devoted to this concept which proves its specific importance in the life of Kazakhs. It is one of them: “*Sylasqannyng kuly bol*” lit. *Be the slave of the person who respects you.*

In the minds of young people, good breeding/courteous behavior (*tarbiely/*

*adepty*) are important characteristic features of politeness since 77% of respondents indicated these traits. Kazakhs pay special attention to “*tarbiely*” (good upbringing), which means good manners and polite behavior resulting from a good upbringing. Politeness is a thing that is not born with man. It is something that man has to learn and be socialized into (Watts, 2003). So, in Kazakh mentality “*tarbiely*” person is a person whose parents did their best to inculcate good discipline and the best moral values so that he grew up an acceptable individual in society. *Tarbiely* encompasses all the best human traits, such as tactfulness, discipline, friendliness, culture, and positivity. The negative form of it, “*tarbie+siz*” (ill upbringing), is one of the worst characteristics of the person’s behavior which also negatively characterizes his parents. Therefore, Kazakhs consider politeness reflects one’s upbringing in a family.

*Meirimdilik* (kindness/generosity) is the second trait of 65% of Kazakh youth. The concept of politeness involves. *Meirimdilik*, in its semantic structure, encompasses all the noble qualities of man, such as love, humanness, high morality, the warmth of heart, the wish to help people, compassion, and caring (*Kazakh Encyclopaedia, 1998*). The Kazakh proverb reads: “*Zherden meirimdilik ketse barlyq zhaksylyk ketedi*” (If kindness leaves the earth, all the goodwill leaves the earth). There is also an English saying, “Kill them with kindness,” which implies that a person who kills people with kindness always prefers the noble road.

Such a person is kind and polite even when provoked by rudeness and anger.

Of particular interest is that the young people associate politeness with the trait of character “*sabyrly*”/“*ozin ozy ustai bilu*” (balanced/tolerant/self-control). With the Kazakhs, these character traits are qualified “*asyl kasiet*”—noble and precious qualities a person can possess. It is common knowledge that all interactions between people involve emotional elements. *Sabyrly* (self-control), in its semantic structure, possesses the meanings of emotional restraint and emotional tolerance, which provide avoidance of conflict, help to soften interpersonal disagreements, the ability to maintain tolerant behavior in stressful situations, and reach a peaceful outcome. Polite people are always *sabyrly*.

Besides these four main indicators—respect, good breeding, balance, and kindness—some respondents showed such human qualities as high morality, helpfulness, understanding people, listening to and hearing people, good character, and having no dirty thoughts about people.

The results of the data obtained from the survey place optimism that the Kazakhstani youth well understand and have internalized the basic politeness principles and politeness strategies. They also have assimilated that politeness is core to daily survival since being polite makes life much more comfortable, helps avoid conflicts, and promotes smooth communication with the surrounding community. For Kazakh youth, one of the important things in their life is not to ruin their parents’ reputation or disgrace

them by misbehaving and being impolite in the public eye. In Kazakh society, it is believed that young people who internalize the basic politeness values will make worthy personalities who will do their best to do positive things for themselves, their family, the environment, the nation, and their country.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study considers the issues related to the Kazakh concept of face and politeness. The concept of face is a very important aspect of the study of politeness. Unfortunately, finding a one-to-one translation of this concept in Kazakh is difficult. For Kazakhs, this issue is a serious matter. They highly value their “face,” and they try hard to live up not to stain their faces all their life.

Historically nomadic, the Kazakhs tried hard to implement the politeness principle ‘Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing.’ It was the only means to successfully survive in the vast steppe, arid nature, and nomadic way of life. By being mutually supportive, avoiding threats to face, and following politeness strategies, which help to prevent conflicts, people could maintain smooth relations and sustain fruitful cooperation. Politeness was socially prescribed.

All Kazakh customs and traditions promote positive politeness, a kind of ‘social accelerator,’ ensuring people ‘come closer’ and unite. Linguistic routines such as greeting, parting, address forms, thanking, and famous “Kazakh hospitality” form part of positive politeness.

Our study allows us to argue that politeness is a nationally specific communicative category, the content of which is the system of ritualized strategies of communicative behavior aimed at harmonious, non-aggressive communication and observance of socially appropriate norms. People try to choose the appropriate strategies to minimize any face threats involved in carrying out the goal-directed activity and comply with the rules for what society or their culture considers appropriate behavior.

The analysis of the survey data shows that the Kazakh youth perceive politeness as a component of their national culture and is governed by national customs and traditions. In their families, they are taught that practicing politeness strategies in day-to-day life will guarantee saving their faces and their parents’ faces (i.e., social approval and acceptance) which serve as a motivating force for them in social interactions.

The results of the data obtained from the survey place optimism that the Kazakhstani youth well understand and have internalized the basic politeness principles and politeness strategies. They also have assimilated that politeness is core to daily survival since being polite makes life much more comfortable, helps avoid conflicts, and promotes the feeling of community and social relationships.

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## **Challenges in Academic Speaking for Non-Native Speakers: The Case of Libyan Students Studying in Malaysia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Malaysian universities' adoption of English as a medium of instruction provides Libyan international students, who have been reported as the seventh largest ethnic group enrolled in those institutions, with opportunities to pursue various fields of study. However, Libyan students struggle with academic speaking resulting from inadequate prior EFL learning experience characterised by a lack of speaking practice. Consequently, causing communicative incompetency that contributes to language anxiety. Therefore, this study investigates the academic speaking challenges of Libyan students in Malaysian academic settings using an explanatory mixed-mode research design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire, interviews, and a focus group discussion. The research found that Libyan international students faced challenges in academic speaking due to insufficient linguistic knowledge and a lack of prior academic speaking practice. The study further found that the Libyan students' speaking challenges in the academic setting were affected by cognitive inhibition resulting from communicative incompetency. The qualitative phase

of the study revealed that the students were reluctant to engage in academic discourse because of their incompetency in academic speaking skills, which caused anxiety and embarrassment. The study results could inform stakeholders such as the Libyan Ministry of Education about the academic speaking challenges of Libyan students studying abroad. Furthermore, it could lead to improvements in preparatory programs, English teaching practices and materials,

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and exposure to academic settings in foreign universities to prepare students to further their studies abroad and achieve international academic success.

*Keywords:* Academic practice challenges, academic speaking, international students, language anxiety, prior learning experience

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## INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation has become a significant and desirable trend in international higher education institutions. The success of this trend depends on the effectiveness of academic speaking in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) setting (Lee, 2004). Speaking is an activity performed individually and socially, involving actions that typically occur before, during, and following speaking events (Cohen, 1996). Learners' speaking skills depend on their cognitive abilities and use of style and interaction strategies in their delivery of public speeches or when participating in discourse with interlocutors.

However, the diverse sociolinguistic backgrounds among academic colleagues pose challenges to interaction in academic contexts. It is especially problematic for international students with EFL learning backgrounds as they may lack sufficient prior practice and practical experience with spoken academic English discourse in authentic natural language situations (Attrill et al., 2016; Diaab, 2016). These students thus need more academic knowledge and proficiency in English language usage, including morphology, academic

terminology, and phonology. They also consequently lack awareness of language variation and knowledge of the types of discourse needed for oral interaction in academic contexts with interlocutors from different or unfamiliar sociolinguistic backgrounds. Thus, the students' inadequate communicative competence ultimately leads to a lack of confidence in academic speaking.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

International students' academic English-speaking challenges include recognising various views expressed by interlocutors and understanding questions (Amiryousefi, 2019; Halali et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). Several studies focused on academic speaking have found that international students faced difficulties applying appropriate academic speaking skills, which were traced to deficiencies in communicative competence. Furthermore, the research found that students often needed higher-order thinking skills and sufficient English language proficiency levels to comprehend and participate in academic discourse related to their fields of study.

These challenges often lead to problems in performing tasks such as engaging in discussions, taking notes during lectures or discussions, and reviewing information regarding coursework or exams. Previous research revealed that international students had difficulties applying academic speaking skills due to inadequate communicative competence. In reviewing related literature, it was found that most international students

experienced challenges in using academic language (Razak et al., 2019; Pourfarhad et al., 2012; Saad et al., 2017). Moreover, these studies revealed that international students frequently needed more requisite higher-order thinking skills and levels of English language proficiency needed for participating in and comprehending the academic discourse relevant to their fields of study.

Research on the academic speaking abilities of international students has found that they encountered problems in the appropriate application of speaking skills in academic settings. The related literature reveals that international students experienced these academic language use challenges at various higher-education levels (Razak et al., 2019; Pourfarhad et al., 2012; Saad et al., 2017). In addition, research on international students' academic speaking challenges has been conducted among students of various nationalities. These include research on students from South-East Asia (Attrill et al., 2016; Sawir, 2005), the Middle East, Africa, and Asia (Singh, 2013), and several other countries (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Singh et al., 2013; Pourfarhad et al., 2012). These studies reveal that the academic speaking challenges encountered by international students involved problems with their accuracy and fluency in grammar usage and pronunciation, confidence in information sharing, and active engagement in academic discourse.

These findings are in line with those of other studies on international students that

additionally identified fluency and accuracy as the most challenging when expressing information without hesitancy that requires linguistic and content knowledge richness, which many international students do not possess (e.g., Wette & Furneaux, 2018; Wolf & Phung, 2019; Yavari & Shafiee, 2019).

Although students may endeavour to overcome these problems, their success in doing so may be impeded by affective factors such as their inadequate prior learning experience and psychological factors such as feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, and frustration, as well as their levels of motivation (Al-Zubaidi & Richards, 2010; Kamaşak et al., 2021; Oxford & Ehrman, 1992; Wolf & Phung, 2019). The limitations imposed by these factors could impede the students' communicative performance in academic discourse, negatively affecting their academic success. For example, Juan and Zainol-Abidin (2013) and Singh (2019) investigated international students' academic speaking challenges while studying in Malaysian universities and found that the students' problems resulted from their prior educational backgrounds, which led to poor English language proficiency. The results of past studies (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Chen et al., 2019; Juan & Zainol-Abidin, 2013; Singh, 2019) indicate that communicative language learning outcomes are affected by several factors. Prior learning experience, individual differences, and cultural differences in educational settings influence the performance of EFL-speaking international students in ESL academic contexts. Furthermore, Brown (2005) found

that personality traits, anxiety, attitude, and prior learning experience inhibit learners' success in speaking.

Language anxiety has been recognised as a negative factor inhibiting foreign language learning and performance (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Furthermore, many previous studies (Andrade, 2006; Chen et al., 2019; Singh, 2019) found that language anxiety affected international students' language learning performance. For example, Andrade's (2006) research revealed that when speaking, "international students experience more anxiety" (p. 149), and this negatively affects their academic success. Moreover, other studies, such as those by Mulyadi et al. (2021) and Shafaei and Razak (2016), found that international students experience various types of anxiety when exposed to new social or educational environments.

In contrast to the above discussion, with the activation of a prior learning experience, new stages of learning can be enabled if learners' prior learning experience provides relevant linguistic knowledge and fosters communicative competence. However, ineffective prior learning would result in a deficient acquisition of linguistic knowledge and thus negatively affect other internal and external factors, which would significantly negatively affect learning processes (Krause et al., 2009; Mulyadi et al., 2021). Moreover, research by Lee et al. (2013) and Singh (2019) investigating international students' speaking challenges found that their poor English proficiency resulted from their prior educational backgrounds.

As many as 1,453 Libyan students are reported to be studying overseas, and the top destination for pursuing their higher education has been Malaysia (Said & Yassin, 2014). Nevertheless, a review of related literature found no previous research on this population. Furthermore, although the Libyan Ministry of Education has supported opportunities for education at the world's 300 top universities, there is a lack of consideration regarding the students' preparation for the English medium of instruction used in Malaysian universities (Abduljalil, 2018; Said & Yassin, 2014). Therefore, it would be beneficial to investigate such issues to identify the coping strategies of Libyan international students in overcoming their academic English learning challenges through reliable, in-depth descriptive research conducted in overseas universities. Thus, this study's objective was to investigate the academic speaking challenges of Libyan international students studying in Malaysian universities and determine the reasons for these speaking challenges.

## **PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL**

This study highlighted and explored the academic English-speaking challenges of Libyan international students studying in Malaysian universities and why students experienced these challenges. Therefore, the study sought to answer two research questions.

RQ1: What academic speaking challenges do Libyan students experience while studying in Malaysian universities?

RQ2: Why do Libyan students experience academic speaking challenges while studying in Malaysian universities?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory, sequential, mixed-methods research design, which was implemented in two phases. The first phase relied on an online questionnaire (i.e., conducted by email) to collect quantitative data, which were submitted to statistical analyses. In the second phase of the research, qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews and a focus group discussion with survey respondents selected through purposive snowball sampling. The subsequent qualitative data analyses were explanatory, focussing on the participants' experiences regarding speaking challenges and their perceptions regarding them.

### Population and Sampling Procedures

As this study is concerned with Libyan international students studying in Malaysian universities, the target population's size and availability were first determined. Then, it was accomplished using data supplied by official sources with the assistance of the Libyan Embassy in Malaysia. According to these sources, in 2020, 257 Libyan students were enrolled in five universities in Malaysia: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). In addition,

students aged 18 years and above were enrolled in bachelor's, master's, and PhD programmes. Approval for the research involving these students was granted by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects at UPM.

Survey response rates more often depend on sampling size than other factors (Sax et al., 2003), so it was essential to determine a valid sample size for the questionnaire survey conducted in the first phase of the research. The sample size was calculated considering Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommended sample size of  $n=155$  for a population of  $N=260$  using Cochran's formula, which yielded a recommended sample size of 154 from the population of 257 students. As Salkind (2012) recommended oversampling of 40–50% to compensate for unreturned incomplete questionnaires, the final calculation included conservative oversampling of 40% (i.e.,  $154 * 0.40 = 62$ ;  $154 + 62 = 216$ ), resulting in an optimal sample size of 216 for the study's quantitative research phase.

A total of 20 initial informants were selected for the qualitative phase of the research through purposive sampling. In addition, 20 initial informants were selected from the online questionnaire respondents after analysing the collected data. Fifteen of them participated in the face-to-face interviews, and five in the focus group discussion. The interview venues and times were arranged with the assistance of key informants selected by the researcher following the participants' preferences.

### **Research Instrument (Survey Questionnaire)**

The items included in the study's survey questionnaire were adopted from previous research to ensure that the content was the latest available and supported the instrument's reliability and validity. In addition, the academic speaking challenges questionnaire developed by Evans and Green (2007) was adopted for the research and validated through a pilot study and by a panel of experts.

The questionnaire items included an eight-point Likert scale with responses corresponding to the students' frequencies of experience with speaking challenges. The responses ranged from "0 = Never face this challenge" to "7 = Every time face this challenge." The Likert scale with all responses is presented in Table 2.

The survey questionnaires were emailed to 257 Libyan students with assistance from the Libyan Embassy in Malaysia. In addition, reminders were sent to respondents if their completed questionnaires were not returned within the stipulated time frame. These procedures resulted in the return of 246 questionnaires. The questionnaires were subsequently screened and cleaned for bias, which resulted in accepting 223 questionnaires for the final data analyses.

The finalised quantitative data were submitted to descriptive statistical analysis to obtain frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations using SPSS.

The overall survey response rate was 86%, with individual rates of 74%, 98%, 91%, 97%, and 100% for the five universities involved in the study.

### **Interviews and Focus Group Discussion**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 informants for 30–40 minutes. Protocol questions regarding the research constructs were prepared for the interviews based on the questionnaire results. These were validated through a pilot study. The focus group discussion involved five informants for 90 minutes. The sessions were documented with transcripts, field notes, and member checks (see Appendices A & B). Confirmation of data saturation was achieved through a qualitative sequential process, ensuring the data collection's reliability and internal validity. The reliability of the qualitative phase results of the study was obtained through triangulation of results from the interviews, focus group discussion, field notes, and member checks. The interview and discussion data were used to support the qualitative analyses of the research constructs, the results of which are discussed below. Qualitative data saturation was achieved through manual thematic analysis and NVivo software. After interpreting the results of the quantitative data analyses, the results were utilised to determine the themes found in the qualitative data sequentially, and the data were then coded using NVivo and thematic analysis. The purpose of combining NVivo software with manual thematic analysis was to ensure that the results were valid.

### **Ethical Approval and Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations of this study were addressed by obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee for Research Involving

Human Subjects (JKEUPM) at Universiti Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM-2020-062). Furthermore, ethical concerns regarding data collection for the study were addressed by stipulating that the collected data would be kept confidential and securely stored for protection against public access. Subsequently, letters of consent were provided to the research participants. Once the above procedures were completed, data collection was allowed to commence, starting with the questionnaire survey. An additional measure of ethical compliance was that the universities, participants, and informants involved in the research were reported anonymously.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics results from analyses of the quantitative survey questionnaire data on speaking challenges are discussed with the support of qualitative data collected through the interviews and focus group discussion conducted during the qualitative research phase. This mixed-methods approach allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the results. In addition, the qualitative results complemented the quantitative analyses to support the study's findings regarding the participants' experiences with speaking challenges.

The descriptive statistics results from analyses of the survey data on speaking challenges, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 1. These results are organised according to the respondents' reported experiences as low, moderate, and high speaking challenges.

According to the results, 66 (29.6%) of the respondents reported having experienced low levels of speaking challenges, 98 (43.9%) reported moderate levels of speaking challenge experience, and 59 (26.5%) reported speaking challenges at high levels (Table 1). The mean and standard deviation were 3.41 and 1.65, respectively.

The descriptive data (Table 2) consist of frequencies, percentages, modes, means, and standard deviations for the survey responses on speaking challenges corresponding to the questionnaire's eight-point Likert scale. These data are arranged in descending order based on the modes and means for the speaking challenges experienced by Libyan students.

The data (Table 2) shows that the survey respondents reported experiencing speaking challenges at moderate levels for every questionnaire item, with an overall mean of 3.41 ( $SD = 1.65$ ). However, the most serious challenge reportedly experienced by

Table 1  
*Categories of speaking challenges*

Levels of Speaking Challenges	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low (0.00–2.339)	66	29.6%	3.41	1.65
Moderate (2.34–3.669)	98	43.9%		
High (4.67–7.00)	59	26.5%		

Note. n = Sample size; % = 100.0.

Table 2  
Descriptive statistics on speaking challenges

Items	Percentage (%)							Mo	M	SD	L
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6				
Challenges in communicating ideas fluently	9 4.0%	18 8.1%	40 17.9%	33 14.8%	36 16.1%	41 18.4%	27 12.1%	19 8.5%	3.77	1.90	M
Challenges in speaking accurate academic English	10 4.5%	29 13.0%	32 14.3%	32 14.3%	35 15.7%	35 15.7%	24 10.8%	26 11.7%	3.72	2.04	M
Challenges in using terms related to the field in academic discussions, lectures, and when sharing ideas	12 5.4%	33 14.8%	34 15.2%	31 13.9%	41 18.4%	39 17.5%	20 9.0%	13 5.8%	3.43	1.92	M
Challenges in having academic speaking with the lecturers or supervisors on academic topics or matters	20 9.0%	24 10.8%	38 17.0%	35 15.7%	38 17.0%	35 15.7%	16 7.2%	17 7.6%	3.35	1.99	M
Challenges in having academic speaking with peers on academic topics or matters	17 7.6%	26 11.7%	36 16.1%	47 21.1%	30 13.5%	30 13.5%	21 9.4%	16 7.2%	3.35	1.96	M
Challenges in participating in academic presentations	18 8.1%	28 12.6%	36 16.1%	44 19.7%	42 18.8%	29 13.0%	16 7.2%	10 4.5%	3.19	1.85	M
Challenges in exploring "teaching stuff" and peers' social norms, such as values	14 6.3%	35 15.7%	45 20.2%	43 19.3%	34 15.2%	21 9.4%	18 8.1%	13 5.8%	3.11	1.89	M
Overall	n = 223; % = 100.0							3.41	1.65	M	

Note. n = Sample size. Eight-point Likert scale: 0 = Never face this challenge, 1 = Rarely face this challenge, 2 = Occasionally face this challenge, 3 = Sometimes face this challenge, 4 = Frequently face this challenge, 5 = Often face this challenge, 6 = Usually face this challenge, 7 = Every time face this challenge. Mo = Mode, M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation. M: Medium levels of challenges



the students was fluency in communicating ideas, with 18.4% of the respondents having faced such challenges often, resulting in the highest overall mean of 3.77 ( $SD = 1.90$ ). Furthermore, the students reported frequently facing challenges regarding the use of terms related to their fields of study in academic discussions and lectures when sharing ideas ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ) and occasionally or frequently having difficulties while speaking with lecturers and their supervisors on academic topics ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ). In addition, the respondents reported that participation in academic presentations was sometimes difficult, with an overall mean of 3.19 ( $SD = 1.85$ ). Finally, 19.3% of the respondents faced difficulties exploring “teaching stuff” and understanding their peers’ social norms and values, which was reported with an overall mean of 3.11 ( $SD = 1.89$ ) and was the challenge with the lowest frequency.

Thus, it was found that the challenges of engaging in academic discourse with lecturers and supervisors accounted for the highest percentage of responses reported on that challenge, which indicated that this was a serious hindrance to the student’s success in academic discourse in the relevant contexts. Previous studies also found that students experienced speaking challenges related to academic speaking with lecturers and supervisors on topics or matters related to academia (Singh et al., 2014). The extant research also indicated that the comprehension of accents challenges students’ abilities in international educational contexts.

The qualitative analyses of data collected from this study’s interviews and focus group discussion allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the findings compared to the quantitative phase of the research reported above. Thus, the analyses led to the identification of three main themes confirming the types of speaking challenges encountered by the Libyan students: (a) lack of language proficiency, (b) lack of confidence in academic speaking, and (c) lack of content knowledge in their disciplines/fields of study. These themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

### **Lack of Language Proficiency**

English language proficiency is the ability to communicate fluently and accurately with interlocutors concerning the accurate use of the observable linguistic features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar appropriate to communicative situations (Cummins, 1980). This study’s survey respondents reported that difficulties related to academic speaking with their lecturers and supervisors resulted from their poor English language proficiency. It was characterised by the student’s lack of fluency in communicating ideas due to their insufficient knowledge of field-related terminology. These deficiencies were attributed to inadequate prior English language learning and lack of practical usage experience in their home country. The Libyan students involved in this research were found lacking in these requisite features of language proficiency. For example, an interview informant attributed their

difficulties in academic speaking to lacking “the correct and proper pronunciation of English terms and words” (Informant 11).

Furthermore, language distance affected the degree to which language transfer was possible between the native and target languages, restricting their ability to improve in unsupervised language learning. Thus, the students reported that they experienced anxiety due to their linguistic performance limitations in academic situations. These findings are supported by Glew’s (2013) research focusing on academic terms and scientific usage among international students in Australian universities. Glew (2013) reported that “students may experience difficulties in using nursing terminology for interactions” (p. 105), resulting from their insufficient prior English language knowledge and practice.

The Libyans’ recognition of their deficiencies led to anxiety about making mistakes and thus being embarrassed while speaking, which led to their reluctance to engage in academic discourse. This reluctance was also attributable to their lack of understanding of academic contexts. Additional information on this was provided during the interviews by an informant who said, “I faced challenges in providing academic presentations and effective academic discussion because of lack of English language teaching and learning in Libyan education” (Informant 2). Another informant, describing the effects of lacking prior academic English knowledge, explained that problems encountered in academic discussions were because it was

“a new experience for the presentation and academic discussion in English in the academic community” (Informant 13).

The results discussed above indicate that the availability of academic terminology in learners’ minds is another factor necessary for successful academic speaking and discussion in academic contexts. Thus, vocabulary knowledge is important in facilitating and simplifying academic speaking in academic discourse. Furthermore, it results in the learner being more willing to engage in academic discourse, which reflects well on the learner’s academic background and strength. Unfortunately, the Libyan research informants reported having extreme limitations regarding their academic vocabulary knowledge, particularly concerning field-specific terminology.

### **Lack of Content Knowledge in the Discipline/Field of Study**

Discipline content knowledge corresponds to comprehension of the subject matter of academic discourse. The study respondents reported experiencing challenges resulting from their lack of understanding that impeded their participation in academic presentations, engaging in discussions with lecturers and supervisors, exploring teaching content, and understanding the social norms of their peers, including their values (Singh, 2019). It was found that Libyan students lacked knowledge of their fields of study. Their deficiencies in content knowledge aligned with their insufficient knowledge of terminology relevant to their

disciplines, which was attributed to their negative prior English learning experience, as discussed above.

The students' responses supported and explained this view during the study's face-to-face interviews. For example, regarding this challenge, Informant 9 explained, "I faced these challenges of understanding the academic content due to the lack of training, practicing and the use of the language in Libya in general and in the scientific and academic field in particular." Another interview informant explained that this lack of knowledge represented a "large barrier" between interlocutors, which led to feelings of being "confused and less focused" due to "fear and anxiety." The extent of these challenges was further elaborated upon in the interviews by Informant 14, who reported "challenges involved in engaging in discussions with colleagues, understanding the academic content, difficulty communicating an idea or expressing an academic topic properly and clearly." In the interviews, Informant 8 commented on the challenge of academic content being "difficult to understand," and Informant 9 elaborated on this challenge in more detail, explaining, "I faced these challenges of understanding the academic content due to the lack of training, practicing and the use of the language in Libya in general and in the scientific and academic field in particular."

In related research, Singh (2019) found noticeable academic speaking challenges experienced by international students from EFL backgrounds who were continuing their

studies in Malaysian universities. The study revealed that these international students lacked the necessary "discipline content knowledge to communicate" (p. 295). In similar research, Mahfoodh (2014) found that international students experienced challenges concerning the socialisation aspects of academic speaking due to their academic speaking challenges regarding linguistic content.

Therefore, the above results indicate that discipline knowledge facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and that activation of prior acquired knowledge related to the current academic area of study is essential to successful engagement in academic speaking (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). Unfortunately, this discipline's content knowledge is often unavailable to Libyan international students. As a result, these Libyans face hurdles in comprehending discussion content resulting from their lack of prior knowledge, which raises their communicative language anxiety regarding academic language practice, preventing them from active participation.

### **Lack of Confidence in Academic Speaking**

In academic speaking, self-confidence is dependent on successfully transmitting thoughts, beliefs, and facts through academic speech in academic settings. Thus, transitioning to a new educational setting could either increase an international student's self-confidence and self-esteem (Sandhu, 2017) or inhibit these characteristics (Youssef, 2018). The Libyan

students in this study reported that they lacked self-confidence and felt fear and anxiety related to participation in academic discourse. It was due to their deficient academic English-speaking abilities. It was elaborated on during the interviews when Informant 2 explained, “I face feeling of anxiety, fear, and hesitation to discuss with the supervisor and the lecturer and the inability to follow the academic and discussion debate effectively because of my fear of putting myself into an embarrassing situation in front of others due to the lack of academic terminologies.” Informant 2 shared additional experience of this in an interview:

*I face anxiety, fear, and hesitation to discuss with the supervisor and the lecturer and the inability to follow the academic and discussion debate effectively because of my fear of putting myself into an embarrassing situation in front of others due to the lack of academic terminologies.*

It indicates the essential role of self-confidence in the student’s academic success. Thus, the student’s lack of self-confidence resulted from their recognition of the academic speaking challenges they faced and the realisation that they had not been prepared through prior practical English language experience in academic settings. For example, interview Informant 3 remarked, “I was having a very negative feeling of fear and anxiety from having an academic discussion with the lecturer/supervisor/colleagues because of no emphasis on the English language in Libyan

education and the lack of interest to learn it.” Thus, the results of the study point to the importance of self-confidence as an essential factor in students’ academic success. It might be achieved through acquiring discipline content knowledge and practice to attain a rich English language proficiency level. However, this was not the case for the Libyan students involved in this study.

Furthermore, in the focus group discussion, several informants expressed these insights in the following examples from the focus group discussion.

*R: I studied courses in Libya and Malaysia before starting my master’s and doctoral studies. Nevertheless, there is anxiety, tension from communicating, and fear from the academic discussion.*

*A: At the beginning of my studies, I faced great challenges and difficulties understanding and communicating with my peer in academic English.*

The informants provided more information about their academic speaking challenges, describing their insufficient language proficiency levels, poor discipline-related content knowledge, and low confidence regarding academic speaking as interrelated.

## **DISCUSSION**

The finding of this study aligns with the result of research conducted by Singh (2019) on lecturers’ views regarding international

students' problems with academic speaking skills. The study revealed, "academic speaking challenges such as lack of discipline content knowledge to communicate, lack of confidence to communicate orally and lack of English language proficiency" (Singh, 2019, p. 205).

The results thus support cognitive theory on speaking skills in the ESL context in that higher-order thinking skills are crucially important to learners as analytical, and reasoning abilities function mainly to enhance cognitive system development to fulfil individual cognitive needs (Lyytinen, 1985; Takac, 2008). The acquisition of these skills depends on rich comprehensible input. It is reflected in the learners' communicative competence, which is a product of their ability to contribute to and engage in academic discussion. However, such skills were not manifested among the study's Libyan students, who attributed the challenges affecting their academic speaking performance to their poor communicative competence resulting from their negative prior learning experience, which inhibited their engagement in the social aspects of academic speaking.

The academic speaking challenges faced by the Libyan international students in this study are due to language proficiency, insufficient discipline content knowledge, and low levels of confidence concerning academic speaking. Previous research findings concerning international students from EFL backgrounds studying in ESL settings are concordant with those reported by this study (Attrill et al., 2016; Yates &

Wahid, 2013). The participants lacked the necessary L2 knowledge that should have been emphasised previously during long-term English language learning and practical experience in natural settings. This deficient prior learning experience led to difficulties in academic English-speaking performance and poor overall academic performance (Attrill et al., 2016). Furthermore, Jalleh et al.'s (2021) supported Singh's (2019) study that the insufficient prior learning and practice of the international students affected the students' subsequent learning experiences by raising their anxiety, which was manifested as communication apprehension.

The reactions of the Libyan students to their academic speaking challenges are in alignment with Piaget's (1987) cognitive theory, Hymes's (1976) communicative competence and Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis in that comprehensible input is necessary for learners' enhancement of cognitive awareness, which is crucial to the attainment of communicative competence. Implementing language practice that involves storing and retrieving knowledge in long- and short-term memory could lower a learner's effective filter, thus facilitating the improvement of communicative competence. However, inadequate prior language learning and a lack of practice negatively affect learners' cognitive awareness, raising their effective filter and blocking the possibility of receiving comprehensible input, resulting in poor communicative competence. Other previous research (Adarkwah & Zeyuan, 2020;

Kurum & Erdemli, 2021) has associated students' academic speaking challenges with deficient communicative competence and learners' analytical and reasoning abilities, which function to enhance cognitive development specific to individuals' needs (Lyytinen, 1985; Takac, 2008).

This research supports the view that prior learning experience "is a potentially important educational variable" (Dochy, 1988, p. 1) and that communicative language anxiety is important to the linguistic processing of information (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). These findings agree with previous studies (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) that revealed relations between deficient academic speaking ability and learner anxiety. Moreover, the results provide insight into the cognitive processes involved in strategies to overcome academic English academic speaking challenges.

The deficiencies in the cognitive processes and knowledge of the Libyan students resulted from inadequate academic speaking experience required for conceptualised language use. These challenges hindered the students' cognition and contributed to their lack of motivation to participate in academic discourse due to increased anxiety. Furthermore, deficient competence in academic speaking negatively affects students' abilities to communicate knowledge fluently and thus increases their anxiety, making participation in academic discourse more difficult (Singh, 2019; Youssef, 2018).

Finally, it is notable that the students took personal responsibility for enhancing their speaking abilities, thus becoming more autonomous learners. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate a new direction for research in understanding the effects of anxiety on EFL and ESL learners in academic contexts. Research should thus consider the influence of prior learning experience on communicative language anxiety. The combined quantitative and qualitative methods used in this research add to the existing literature and research approaches in studying the affective factors of academic speaking and determining strategies to mediate the challenges.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although this study revealed the significant influence prior learning experience and language anxiety have on the improvement of academic speaking, future ESL and EFL research involving international students should examine other important affective factors such as emotional states and responses and their influences (Amiryousefi, 2019) regarding the processes of language learning. Furthermore, research on these other affective factors could reveal more about the academic speaking and general language use of international students from various socio-cultural settings and with various proficiency levels in English academic contexts. In addition, the findings of this research may be important to Malaysian higher education institutions in improving their pre-session English programmes so that they are more conducive to facilitate

the educational experiences of international students from EFL and other educational backgrounds. Furthermore, the Libyan Ministry of Education should seriously consider this study's findings on the effects of negative prior learning experiences on Libyan students' academic achievement in developing or improving English language educational programs. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the essential role of language learning theory in evaluating and strengthening international students' academic speaking skills, particularly those from EFL learning backgrounds. The findings thus suggest integrating socio-academic approaches for the enhancement of learning by taking into consideration environmental factors in enhancing international students' learning in new educational settings. Therefore, further research should be undertaken to examine Libyan and other international students' academic speaking strategies who are from various socio-cultural backgrounds and the affective factors associated with learning challenges and their related mediating strategies.

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## APPENDIX A

### Informant Member Check Sample

#### ACADEMIC SPEAKING CHALLENGES AMONG LIBYAN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

#### CONFIRMATION OF INTERVIEW DATA BY RESPONDENTS TO THE STUDY

I hereby agree and verify that the conversation text is based on the interview conducted by  
the researcher with me at the stated date and place with ....

(Mark √ on the applicable box)

No correction and additions	√
Some corrections and additions	
A lot of corrections and additions	

Signature: 

Name: 

Identity Card: 

Date: 18/4/2021

Thank you for all the cooperation and assistance given. I wish you all the success in your study  
journey and life.

Ahlam Ali Salim Halali  
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## APPENDIX B

### Consent Letter for the Interviews and focus group discussion

#### Request for Interview

I am Ahlam Ali Salim Halali, a PhD student at University Putra Malaysia (UPM). The purpose of this interview session is to identify in detail the reasons, examine academic language challenges faced by Libyan international students, and their strategies to overcome these challenges. As you have participated in the questionnaire session and you have the overall idea about the research topic, I will be so appreciated taking a while from your time to talk to you to share more details related to your experience in academic English language in listening and speaking to benefit from your experience.

Therefore, kindly provide me with your email and contact phone number and the convenient place for you for the interview. I would be very grateful for your cooperation in case I will be looking for another interview session. The interview will be conducted in Arabic for an hour. Your responses will be protected from public disclosure, stored in a secure location. The questionnaire will be statistically analysed on a password-protected computer.

By beginning the interview, you acknowledge that you are at least 18 years old, have understood the above information, and agree based on your consent to voluntarily participate in this research.

الاسم أحلام علي سالم، طالبة دكتوراه في جامعة بوترا ماليزيا. أقدم بين أيديكم هذه المقابلة التي تتعلق بدراسة تحديات اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمية، وأسبابها، واستراتيجيات مواجهتها لدى الطلبة الليبيين. وأتعهد بالتحفظ على المعلومات المقدمة، ولن تُستعمل إلا في غرض الدراسة الذي صُممت من أجله. نظرًا لأنك شاركت في الجزء الأول وهو الاستبيان ولديك فكرة عامة حول موضوع البحث، فسأكون ممتنًا للغاية لأخذ البعض من وقتك لإجراء مقابلة معك لمشاركة تفاصيل أكثر متعلقة بتجربتك في تحديات اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمية "الاستماع والتحدث" للاستفادة من خبرتك. لذلك، يرجى تزويدي برقم بريدك الإلكتروني ورقم هاتفك والمكان المناسب لك للمقابلة. سأكون ممتنًا للغاية لتعاونك في حال تطلب الأمر جلسة مقابلة أخرى. سيتم إجراء المقابلة باللغة العربية لمدة ساعة. من خلال بدء المقابلة، فإنك تقر بأن عمرك لا يقل عن 18 عامًا، وتوافق على المشاركة الطوعية في هذا البحث. نسأل الله التوفيق للجميع

Ahlam Ali Salim Halali

[ahlamphdstudent@gmail.com](mailto:ahlamphdstudent@gmail.com)

TESL/Ph.D. candidate

Signature *Ahlam. A. S. Halali*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Effects of Visual Input and Text Types on the Listening Comprehension of EFL Students in China

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been an interest in using visual input in multimodal applications for language learning. However, the effects of visual input in listening materials remain to be discussed. Past literature has shown no unified answer to the effects of video input in improving listening comprehension scores. Since there are many proposals for the diversified reform of English teaching methods, it is worth examining whether using traditional audio listening only or using different video inputs can bring more significant benefits to students. The subjects of this study are 30 non-English majors in Chinese universities. This paper applied the quantitative research method, testing students' performance using different listening visual inputs (content, context, and audio only) and different listening text types (monologue and dialogue). Data were analysed using the two-way repeated measures within groups ANOVA. The interaction effects and the main effect of variables on listening performance were examined to explore the impact of visual input and text types on English listening comprehension. The following conclusions are drawn from the data analysis: (1) The interaction effect shows that video and text types significantly affect students' listening scores. Videos that contain authentic listening scenes and content elements are beneficial to promote listening comprehension as they support

students' interpretation and understanding of what they hear, and (2) It was noted that grouping students by listening proficiency and examining their cultural background would expand the study in the future.

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## INTRODUCTION

As an input skill, listening plays a vital role in students' language development. The development of students' listening comprehension in the classroom is closely related to the listening materials they use (Richards, 2008; Sadiku, 2015; Vandergrift, 1999). Listening is examining verbal information and interpreting non-verbal information (Chion, 2019; Guillebaud, 2017). However, in traditional teaching and assessment of listening, students' listening comprehension is tested based solely on listening to audio input. With the development of multimedia technology, language learners can now access audio-visual materials that integrate listening and visuals. Although most researchers affirm its positive effects on listening comprehension (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005; Wagner, 2010), some studies point out that the use of videos does not have a positive effect on listening comprehension, and sometimes it even hinders learners' listening comprehension (Cubilo & Winke, 2013; Gruba, 2006; Suvorov, 2009). In summary, research results on the effects of video and audio on listening comprehension have yet to reach consistent experimental results.

Most real-life listening processes are multimodal (Campoy-Cubillo & Querol-Julián, 2015; Guichon & McLornan, 2008). The listeners can view the scene of the event and observe the speaker's facial expressions and body movements. In contrast, students can only hear processed sounds in traditional listening tests. They are expected to develop inferences or predictions based on what

they hear to interpret the intended message without supporting information, such as the speaker's identity, facial expressions, and speech situation. It should not be overlooked, however, that in traditional audiometric examinations, the listening test is highly well-structured at the level of comprehension of phonetic information. The addition of visual information changes the listening test from a test of sound decoding to a test that includes sound decoding and non-speech information interpretation. Nevertheless, for non-traditional English teaching and learning, using internet video resources to update information is necessary to provide an authentic and vivid language cognitive environment. As a result, in recent years, more and more attention has been dedicated to determining ways to integrate video resources into English education (Harmer, 2001; Hung, 2015; Richards, 2008).

Text types or listening texts refer to the text used in teaching listening comprehension. The main body is the language material, but because of the nature of the language material as the listening text, it also involves language accuracy, intonation, tone, and speed of the language material. According to Atay (2005), the teaching interpretation of any language text has three dimensions: the dimension of language itself, the dimension of language as a teaching material, and the dimension of language used in teaching activities. The dimension of language as a listening teaching material includes the language difficulty, the graphical difficulty, and the genre of the listening texts. Concerning the

listening text genre, Lu (2016) divided it into two types: dialogue and monologue. The dialogue covers life conversations, teaching conversations, TV programmes, and radio programmes, while monologues include life monologues, speeches, and TV and radio programmes, among others. Listening texts can also be classified based on their contents, complexity, authenticity, sphere, theme, number, and other factors. According to Neri et al. (2003), the basic types of oral expression are dialogue and monologue, broadly recognised.

Context visuals depict details about the context of a verbal encounter, such as the participants, location, and text type. For example, a photograph of a man and a woman chatting in a classroom may be used as a background visual to the dialogue being heard. According to Ginther (2002), background images have two fundamental functions: (a) setting the stage for the verbal exchange and (b) signalling a change in speakers in dialogue. Finally, content visuals are visuals relevant to the content of the verbal interaction, which can include still images, videos, drawings, diagrams, and others. An example would be the inclusion of a photograph of Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa in a lecture on Renaissance art.

This research incorporates multimodal teaching into classroom listening by providing students with different video types and exploring the impact of varying video and textual inputs on students' listening effects. Visual input is categorised into content video and context video as used in the literature (Suvorov, 2008, 2009, 2015).

In the current study, student performance on these types of visual input and audio-only input is examined. The text types consist of two: dialogue and monologue. In this paper, there are three specific research questions:

- a. Will the different video inputs— context video, content video, and audio-only— affect students' listening comprehension?
- b. Will the different textual inputs— monologue and dialogue—affect students' listening comprehension?
- c. Are there any interaction effects between the two independent variables (visual and textual input)?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Multi-Modality

“Multi-modality” is also called multi-symbol, which refers to the phenomenon where people use multiple senses to communicate through language, text, images, sounds, expressions, actions, symbols, and other means (Yuan & Fengping, 2021). In the communication process, a large part of the meaning is not reflected by language but by other factors. For example, some symbols appear with language, and in terms of sound, some are expressed through speech rate, intonation, and stress. Physically, they are expressed through body movements, expressions, and gestures. Therefore, communication is not only carried out by using a single sense but also through multiple senses at the same time. Whether it involves a single medium, dual media, or multimedia, it can be called

multimodal if its content is presented in more than one medium (Li et al., 2021).

Some scholars believe that compared to pure audio-monomodal materials of the same content, audio-visual materials which involve audio and visual input can reduce the difficulty of listening (Li, 2019). Ginther (2002), for example, showed that video could supplement audio information in the context of a scene. To explore the effects of video (audio-visual) and pure audio on listening comprehension, some scholars in China have made further discoveries through empirical research. Delu (2009), who conducted empirical research, found that in learning English, a multimodal combination of audio and video with English subtitles has the most significant effect on students' listening comprehension, followed by audio and video with Chinese subtitles, and audio and video without subtitles, while audio alone has a minor effect. The experimental research conducted by Woottipong (2014) showed a big difference between the scores of the video group and the audio group, indicating that video can promote listening comprehension. Maleki and Rad (2011) investigated the effects of visual and textual to verbal stimuli on listening comprehension performance. They found that visual aids were more advantageous to listeners with low proficiency. In contrast, textual aids were more beneficial to listeners with higher proficiency, and tests with more static images yielded much better performance than those with fewer static images.

Other researchers have also obtained many valuable results in the empirical research of multimodal teaching of listening.

Baltova's (1994) research mainly focused on French listening, and the target population was Canadian non-French majors. Experiments showed that French subtitles helped students recall the content of listening materials in teaching listening. Vandergrift (2004) also took French listening lessons as the research object. Through investigation and research, it was found that students showed a high interest in multimodal listening teaching and were very willing to accept it. The study of Romero and Arévalo (2010), which focused on the role of multimodal teaching of listening, found that the multimodal teaching of a listening model can promote a better understanding of listening materials among students.

### **Text Types**

Ginther (2002) researched the effects of the presence or absence of different types of stimuli (dialogues, short conversations, academic discussions, and mini talks) and proficiency on students' performance on the TOEFL. He used a video format for dialogue and lectures in his study. He noted that the total score of the dialogue and lecture videos was noticeably lower than those presented in the pictorial and audio formats. This difference was so significant that it must not be ignored. The focus of another study conducted by Wagner (2008) investigated the effects on L2 listeners watching a video monitor when presented with different listening video text types, such as academic lectures and dialogues. The test consisted of six tasks: three dialogue and lecture texts. Statistical analysis revealed that the



time subjects focused on the video monitor during the three dialogue texts was higher (72%) than when they focused on the three lecture texts (67%).

Moreover, Amiri and Saberi (2017) explained whether dialogues and lectures, the two primary sources of textual materials, affect listening comprehension tests differently. The participants in their study were 60 male English language learners. To examine the influence of the different text types on the participants' listening comprehension scores, the researcher used an internet-based listening test designed by Suvorov (2008). The passages consisted of different text types, including dialogues and lectures, in various input formats (audio, video, and image). The results showed that the participants' test scores on dialogue passages did not differ from their scores on lecture passages in all input formats. This result provides a new idea for the variables of the two perspectives in this paper.

### **Types of Visual Input and Listening Comprehension**

It is necessary to consider the different types of visual information to estimate the role of visuals in L2 listening more accurately (Lesnov, 2018). It would lead to a more meaningful analysis of the impact of the visuals on both the lower-level and higher-level processes in L2 listening. Most studies have shown that video materials can improve listening to a certain extent (Picou et al., 2011). The reason is that the richness and authenticity of video content can significantly stimulate learners'

interest in learning; the relevant background knowledge provided in the video also helps learners grasp the overall content. In addition, video can embody some virtual abstract concepts and construct a schematic model of the information in the brain, significantly reducing listening difficulty (Gruba, 2006).

Scholars hold three views on the role of video in listening comprehension. One group of scholars found through experiments that the brain's simultaneous processing of auditory and visual information can interfere with listening comprehension because the insertion of a motion or still picture will distract attention, which increases the cognitive burden and makes it easier to cause the loss of listening information (Pusey & Lenz, 2014; Seeber, 2017). Another school of scholars indicates that the scenes conveyed in the video, the speaker's gestures, body posture, and paralinguistics, among others, can provide learners with more clues and help activate existing schemas and establish the connection between the new and old information, stimulating the learners to recall the information they heard, thereby promoting understanding (Ginther, 2002; Guichon & McLornan, 2008). The last group of scholars found that the information in the video had no significant effect on the listening comprehension scores when they compared the listening scores of the candidates in the video group and the audio group (Sarani et al., 2014).

The reasons why scholars hold different opinions can be summarised in the following paragraph.

First, some researchers needed to classify the type of video information involved. It is important as different types of video information may affect students' listening ability. According to Ginther (2002) and Ockey (2007), video information is mainly divided into context and content. A context video provides listeners with scenes of the video material and the speakers, but the scenes in the video are fixed (Wijnants et al., 2019, October). For example, in a classroom lecture, listeners can see a teacher teaching the students, but it is difficult to guess the main topic of the lecture. On the contrary, a content video shows the scenes and the person talking and allows listeners to guess the main topic through the constantly switching screens. For example, listeners watching a TV news announcer reporting on war or natural disaster can guess the main content of the news through the series of images presented even though they do not hear the specific details.

Second, some researchers did not group the foreign language proficiency of the subjects (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005). Their study investigated the contribution of gestures and facial cues to second-language learners' listening comprehension of a videotaped lecture by a native speaker of English. A total of 42 learners of English as a second language were randomly assigned to three stimulus conditions: AV-gesture-face (audio-visual including gestures and face), AV-face (no gestures), and Audio-only. The result showed that AV-gesture-face showed the best results. However, the shortcoming of this paper is that there did not divide students into groups according to their

different language proficiency. Therefore, video information may have different effects on learners of different foreign language proficiency, i.e., although it may benefit some candidates, it may have no significant effect on others.

Suppose researchers have not classified different listening tasks and question types. In that case, different video information may significantly affect certain tasks and question types, but it has no significant effect on other tasks and question types. Whether video information promotes learners' listening comprehension may be related to their ability to interpret the images in the video or their attitude towards the video (Wagner, 2008; 2010). This paper, therefore, attempts to make up for the shortcomings of existing research and more comprehensively investigate the impact of different video types and text types on their listening performance.

## METHOD

The research questions were addressed quantitatively using a within-subjects quasi-experimental design. In this research, the independent variables measured throughout the experiment were types of visual input (context visual, content visual, and audio-only) and text types (dialogue and monologue). In contrast, the dependent variable was the listening performance score on the online test.

## Participants

The 30 students who took the listening test were all second-year students from different

majors at Anhui International Studies University. Twelve males and 18 females took English listening courses in the 2021–2022 school year. In addition, they must take the English listening comprehension course offered in the second-year student semesters. Due to the epidemic’s impact, the convenience sampling method was used, a type of non-probability sampling involving the sample being drawn from that part of the population close to hand.

**Materials**

An online listening comprehension test (OLCT) was developed to investigate the students’ performance on visual and textual input types. The online listening test took two weeks for the teachers at the Language Testing Centre of Anhui Foreign Language Institute, who selected appropriate video material from the news and then chose six different areas of video news from the alternative 10. Then reviewed by relevant experts, it was posted on the Chaoxing platform. Finally, students logged in to their accounts and answered the questions on the platform. The test consisted of six listening passages and 30 multiple-choice questions and lasted 40 minutes. Each listening passage has one of the two text types: dialogue and monologue. In addition, the researchers used one of the three types of visual input in the

test: a context visual, a content visual, and no visual (i.e., audio-only format) with the listening comprehension passages. Table 1 outlines the structure of the OLCT, and the sequence of the passages played in the online test. To ensure that students can avoid the impact of fatigue on their performance during the listening process, the playback order of the test is as follows: AD-XM-TD-AM-TM-XD.

The input was selected from Voice of America (VOA) news channels and other American-based mainstream media. The topics covered culture, history, politics, and others. After watching each video clip, test-takers are expected to respond to the questions by selecting the best answer from the four options. According to the classification of visual types by Bejar and Ginther (2002), a context video contains visual information about the context of the lecture. It mainly serves three purposes: (1) It is focused on the situation, (2) it sets the scene for verbal exchange, and (3) it gives a cue to the viewers on a change of speakers in the conversation. For example, a context news clip can show a journalist and a US security advisor talking about American foreign policy in a studio. In the studio, listeners can only see the two people exchanging information verbally. A screenshot of the video, which illustrates

Table 1  
*Structure of the OLCT*

Audio-only		Context		Content	
Dialogue	Monologue	Dialogue	Monologue	Dialogue	Monologue
AD	AM	XD	XM	TD	TM

A = Audio, X = context video, T = content video, M = monologue, D = dialogue

a context video from the OLCT where the message is conveyed through verbal information between the host and the US security advisor, is provided in Figure 1.

A content video, on the other hand, provides visual information besides oral input. The visual information can be a photo, a graph, or a drawing related to the content of the verbal stimulus. These visuals are referred to as content visuals (Ginther, 2002). For example, in a content monologue, the News comes with some visual stimuli, such as the video scene of the Covid-19 vaccination appearing in the video. Figure 2 provides a screenshot of the content monologue. The video shows the global spread of Covid-19 and the response strategies, such as vaccinations adopted by many countries. In this screenshot, the image shown in the video is the back of a man who is being vaccinated, so the content video can provide some listening information to help listeners better understand the listening materials.

The selection of video clips for the OLCT to ensure consistency in the content of the video was based on the following criteria:

1. Each video comes from news broadcasted by mainstream television broadcast news channels in the United States.
2. Each piece of news is limited to topics related to social life, such as economics, education, and politics.
3. Each video's content difficulty is similar and based on the Flesch-Kincaid grade level measurement. All videos are "fairly difficult" in terms of their level of the grade level test.
4. Speakers in all videos use American pronunciation.
5. The length of the video is about 3 minutes.
6. All videos have the same sound and picture quality.
7. All content videos provide pictures and videos related to the content. The context video provides sound and picture images but does not display other relevant prompt information about the content of the conversation.
8. All dialogue videos are between two people with no third person involved.



Figure 1. A screenshot of a page with a context video from the OLCT

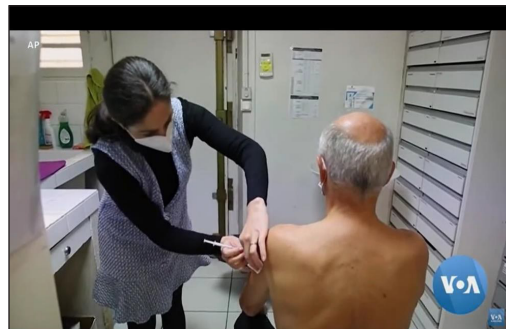


Figure 2. A screenshot of a page with a content monologue video from the OLCT

The researcher utilised the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels to determine the difficulty level of the language used in each video clip. These two formulas are the most extensively used readability formulas for determining the difficulty level of written texts. Despite some concerns about a lack of “empirical validations of the listenability/readability equation”, according to Suvorov and Hegelheimer (2013), some researchers have used Flesch’s readability formulas to assess “listenability” (i.e., external factors that make listening difficult or easy) (Rubin, 1994, p. 263). Flesch Reading Ease ratings are given on a scale of one to one hundred, with lower scores indicating difficult readability. Flesch Reading Ease scores and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels for each video clip in the OLCT are provided in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, the difficulty of all video and audio is similar. Therefore, the score description is fairly difficult.

### Procedure

Before the study began, the researcher introduced the project to the students,

requested them to sign the agreement, and informed them of the online test time and location. Then, two days before the pilot test, the researchers and an IT specialist inspected the equipment, such as the earphones and screen connections in the multimedia classroom, to ensure that the listening test would proceed smoothly.

On the day of the listening test, the three teachers arrived at the multimedia language room one hour in advance. They placed a piece of white paper and a pencil on each student’s desk to allow them to take notes during the test and use them when answering the questions. Before the formal test began, the invigilator read out the online test instructions. Since the Chaoxing test platform has a memory function, all the questions answered were recorded even if the students quit halfway. Chaoxing is the campus teaching platform, so all students are given a student ID upon enrolment. It allows them to use the software to submit their homework after signing in, so students know its login operation. The researcher distributed the test papers before the start of the test to each student based on their student ID. When the students logged in to

Table 2  
*Readability statistics for the scripts of video clips in the OLCT*

Video/Audio Clip	Visual type	Word Count	Flesch Reading	Score Description	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels
Video1	Content Dia	550	58.411	Fairly difficult	11.59
Video2	Content mono	414	57.61	Fairly difficult	10.94
Video3	Context Dia	555	52.125	Fairly difficult	10.4
Video4	Content mono	488	57.315	Fairly difficult	8.056
Audio1	Audio	463	52.72	Fairly difficult	9.19
Audio2	Audio	551	58.76	Fairly difficult	9.62

their accounts, they could see a notification of the listening test in the message column. They then clicked to enter and started to answer the questions. A countdown clock also appeared on the exam page to remind students of the remaining time. Figure 3 is a screenshot of a webpage with a test item.

**Data Analysis**

The repeated measures within-subjects Two Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the interaction effects and the main effects of the factors in the study to answer the three research questions. The two within-subject factors are visual and textual input with three (content, context, and audio only) and two (monologue and dialogue) levels, respectively. If a statistically significant difference is found, the main effects of visual input and textual input will be analysed through a one-way repeated measures ANOVA for visual input

(3 levels) and Paired Samples t-test for textual input (2 levels), respectively. Before the use of ANOVA, descriptive statistics involving the means, standard deviations, and values of skewness and kurtosis were calculated for overall test scores, as well as for scores on the two factors on the OLCT. The assumption about the validity of the procedure (i.e., normal distribution of scores and Skewness and Kurtosis of the data is satisfied).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics under different video input modalities (i.e. audio-only, context video, and content video).

Results shown in Table 3 reveal that performance on the content visual has the highest mean (M=7.9, SD=1.06). The mean for listening with context video is slightly lower (M=7.16, SD=1.08), while the mean

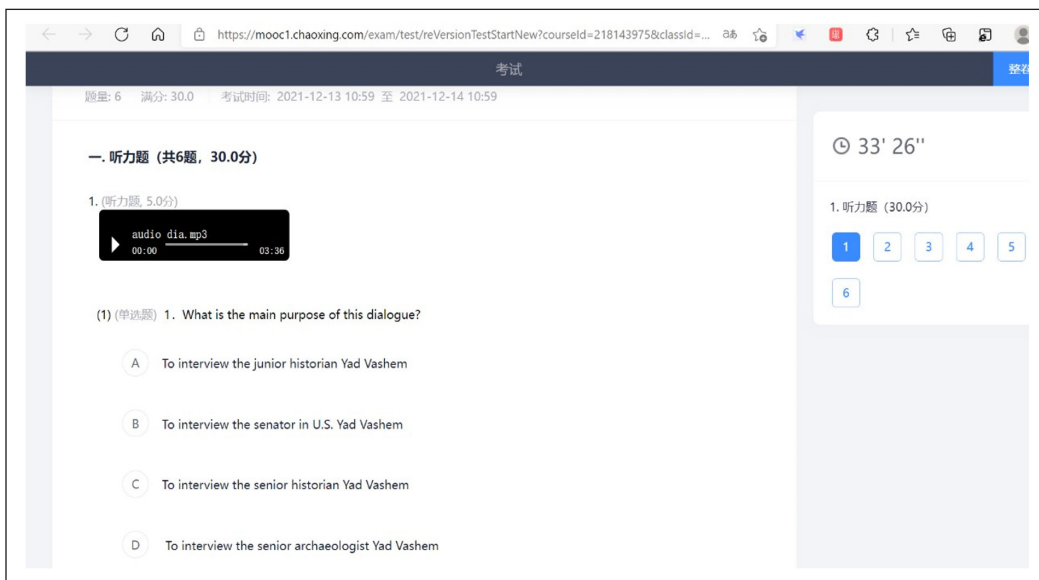


Figure 3. A screenshot of a webpage with a test item from OLCT

for performance on audio-only stimulus has the lowest score ( $M=7.13$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ).

The descriptive statistics under different text types are shown in Table 3.

Results shown in Table 4 reveal that the mean is higher in dialogue text types than in monologue text types which are ( $M=11.3$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ) and ( $M=10.9$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ), respectively.

The descriptive statistics under different text types and visual input are below in Table 5.

Table 5 reveals that the mean is highest in content visual input with dialogue text type (TD) ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=0.65$ ), and the lowest score is in audio-only with dialogue ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=0.5$ ).

Because students were within a group, they were repeatedly measured based on different video and text modalities. General linear repeated measures were performed to determine whether an interaction between the two independent variables existed, and the P-value of the interaction effect was

Table 3  
*Descriptive statistics for types of visual input*

Visual	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
AUDIO	30	7.1333	.77608	-.242	.427	-1.261	.833
CONTEXT	30	7.1667	1.08543	.514	.427	.496	.833
CONTENT	30	7.9000	1.06188	-.159	.427	-.769	.833

Table 4  
*Descriptive statistics for different text types*

Textual	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
DIA	30	11.3000	1.41787	.282	.427	-.407	.833
MONO	30	10.9000	1.29588	.299	.427	-.914	.833

Table 5  
*Descriptive statistics for different visual input \* text types*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
AD	30	3.5333	.50742	-.141	.427	-2.127	.833
AM	30	3.6000	.56324	.198	.427	-.835	.833
XD	30	3.6000	.72397	.210	.427	-.234	.833
XM	30	3.5667	.62606	.635	.427	-.453	.833
TD	30	4.1667	.64772	-.166	.427	-.502	.833
TM	30	3.7333	.63968	.291	.427	-.554	.833

AD = Audio dialogue, AM = Audio monologue, XD = context Dialogue, XM = context monologue, TD = Content Dialogue, TM = Content Monologue

observed. The result of this interactive effect is shown in Table 6.

The results of the two-way repeated-measures ANOVA revealed that there was a significant interaction effect between visual input and different textual types ( $F(2,58) = 4.09, p < .05, \eta p^2 = .124$ ). The interactive effects of visual input and text type influenced the participants' performance. The main effect of visuals was also noted to be significant, while the main effect of textual stimuli was not. The main effect of two independent variables, i.e., visual and textual, was also examined. The repeated measure was conducted again, and Bonferroni was chosen to compare the main effect between the two variables. The results are shown in Table 7.

The pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference in the performance on content and audio-only stimuli as well as on context and audio-only stimuli. There was, however, no significant difference between performance on content and context visual stimuli. It shows that students' performance is better when listening comprehension materials are presented with visuals, regardless of whether they are content or context visuals than when there is no visual.

Results of pairwise comparisons to observe the main effect of text types are provided in Table 8.

The results shown in Table 8 indicate that the text type has no significance in the main effect ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 6  
*The test of within-subjects effect between visual and textual input*

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Visual	Sphericity Assumed	5.633	2	2.817	9.782	.000	.252
Error(visual)	Sphericity Assumed	16.700	58	.288			
textual	Sphericity Assumed	.800	1	.800	2.275	.142	.073
Error(textual)	Sphericity Assumed	10.200	29	.352			
Visual * textual	Sphericity Assumed	2.100	2	1.050	4.087	.022	.124
Error(visual*textual)	Sphericity Assumed	14.900	58	.257			

Table 7  
*Pairwise comparison for the main effect of visual input*

(I) visual	(J) visual	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-.017	.094	1.000	-.256	.223
	3	-.383*	.092	.001	-.617	-.150
2	1	.017	.094	1.000	-.223	.256
	3	-.367*	.107	.006	-.639	-.095
3	1	.383*	.092	.001	.150	.617
	2	.367*	.107	.006	.095	.639

N/B: 1 = content, 2 = context, 3 = audio only



Table 8  
*Pairwise comparisons for the main effect of textual input*

(I) textual	(J) textual	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Differences	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.133	.088	.142	-.047	.314
2	1	-.133	.088	.142	-.314	.047

N/B: 1 = dialogue, 2 = monologue

In summary, for Research Question One, i.e., ‘Will the different video inputs (context video, content video, and audio-only) have different effects on students’ listening comprehension?’, results show that the students’ listening scores for the content video input mode are the highest. There is almost no difference between the student’s scores in the context video mode and the pure audio input mode. There was a significant main effect in the visual input and pairwise comparisons, which indicates that this effect was due to the significant difference between the content visual input and the audio-only input and between the content visual input and the audio-only input. There was no significant difference in the visual input pairwise comparison between the content and context type.

As for Research Question Two, in terms of text types, the results of descriptive statistics show that the mean scores on dialogue text type are higher than on monologue text type among students. However, in the within-group main effect test, it was found that the effect between listening to the dialogue and monologue stimuli was not significant. Lastly, for Research Question Three, i.e., “Are there any interactive effects between the two independent variables,” ANOVA results

indicate that there is a significant interaction effect of visual and textual input on student performance ( $F(2,58) = 4.09, p < .05$ ). Performance was highest when the video involved content and was presented in a dialogue. Performance was lowest when it involved audio-only presented in monologue. The interaction between visual input and text types suggests that teachers should be fully aware of the features of a listening text and the nature of videos when teaching or assessing listening comprehension.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions are summarised as follows: From the perspective of video type, the highest scores are in content video type, followed by context video, and finally, audio-only listening. Regarding text type, participants’ scores in dialogue text-type videos were higher than those in monologue videos. The interaction of the two shows that video and text types significantly affect students’ listening scores.

This study is based on the impact of different video types and text types on listening, which results in several effects. First, experimental data show that content video media has a significant

impact on listening comprehension. Thus, it is recommended that teachers incorporate content videos into classroom listening training in the future. Videos containing authentic listening scenes and content elements promote listening comprehension as they support students' interpretation and understanding of what they hear.

Second, experimental results show a significant effect on the interaction of visual and text types; therefore, teachers should consider this. Finally, it is worth noting that the highest scores were observed in content-type videos involving dialogues. Contrary to the belief that content in content-type videos may distract students in their listening comprehension task and that those dialogues would do the same because of the presence of an additional speaker, students seem to have performed well under these conditions. In listening comprehension, students use as much information as they see and hear, which does not distract them from their task.

In a theoretical sense, the results of this study will contribute to the multimodal theories in learning and contribute to a more effective English teaching method. The results are designed to contribute to the representational features of auditory and visual senses to provide theoretical explanations for multimodal processing. In a practical sense, it provides insight for selecting and designing various types of English video materials required by teachers and test developers to assess students' English listening ability in authentic settings accurately.

As shown by the experiment conducted in this study, when the visual modality

provides background knowledge that directly corresponds to the auditory information, it will promote students' cognition, thereby improving students' listening comprehension. However, if the visual information does not correspond to the auditory information, it will form a cognitive load and distract students' attention. Receiving different simultaneous information can result in excessive cognitive costs, preventing students from processing the information effectively (Kirschner et al., 2018). Therefore, in listening classes, teachers must master the synergistic, reinforcing, or complementary relationship between the various modalities to improve their teaching quality. If the different modes are contradictory, irrelevant, and disconnected from each other, it may affect teaching. In this sense, mode selection should be based on the principle of increasing positive effects (Ruan, 2015).

This paper has the following limitations: Firstly, this research focused on the performance and achievement of students under different teaching methods in the classroom, and classroom interaction is not within the scope of the study. The sample analysed in the study consists of 30 Chinese students studying at Anhui International Studies University in Anhui Province. They are non-English majors between 19 and 20 years old and have been learning English as a foreign language for 8-10 years. Therefore, the study findings may not be generalised to other samples or populations, especially those with significantly different cultural and educational backgrounds. In addition, the failure to carry out high-level and

low-level grouping is also a major defect of the paper. It is recommended that later researchers discuss the effects of different proficiency levels among students on visual and text types of stimuli.

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## Effects of Metacognitive Strategies and Gender Differences on English as a Second Language (ESL) Students' Listening Comprehension

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of metacognitive strategies and gender differences on ESL students' listening comprehension. This study employed a mixed-method approach, specifically a quasi-experimental research design consisting of pre-test and post-test control, experimental groups and focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were conducted with the ESL students to get more information on how they applied the metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension. Sixty-two Lower Form Six students participated

in this study and were selected based on a random sampling technique from two schools in the Seremban district, Malaysia. Pre-test and post-test data were analysed using the paired *t*-test, and data from the focus group interviews were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that the students exposed to metacognitive strategies had a significant difference in scores with *t* (6.175), *p* < .001 attained in comparison to

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the traditional method. However, there is no significant difference in gender influence on the effects of metacognitive strategies on students' listening comprehension with  $t(60) = 0.628, p = .533 > .05$ . It can be inferred that gender does not influence the effect of metacognitive strategies on listening comprehension. Therefore, regardless of gender, if a student is exposed to such strategies, his or her listening comprehension will improve. Findings from the students' interviews showed three dimensions of the metacognitive knowledge applied: person knowledge, task knowledge and strategic knowledge. Findings suggest that these metacognitive strategies should be a part of the pedagogical approach and should be mastered by teachers to assist ESL students in improving their listening comprehension.

*Keywords:* ESL classroom, ESL students, listening skills, Metacognitive strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening skills, in general, are important for students to develop proficiency as they demand listeners to understand and perform complex activities, such as discerning between sounds and elucidating intonation and emphasis. However, listening is difficult and challenging to acquire when learning a second language (Arnold, 2000; Cao & Lin, 2020; Goh, 2000). Listening comprehension has received the least attention in TESL, although it is one of the most crucial skills in language learning (Berne, 1998; Amado, 2005; Oxford, 2008; Rubin, 2005).

Graham (2006) found that students favour listening less because it is viewed as less critical for success than other skills. Despite the significance of growing listening comprehension abilities, L2 students seldom learn how to pay attention efficaciously (Berne, 1998; Vandergrift, 2007). Kurita (2012) stated that listening comprehension is a key aspect of language learning as it facilitates the development of writing, reading, and speaking skills in acquiring a new language. It is also recognised that students struggle to master listening comprehension as they must use certain mental processes to interpret the meaning of the information. These processes require them to speak English and are known as listening comprehension strategies. Cohen (2000) noted that some researchers in L2 listening reported that students could not answer listening activities effectively by employing appropriate metacognitive strategies.

## Challenges in Teaching Listening Comprehension

Nunan (1997) and Field (1998) pointed out that in English as a Second Language learning, the main focus of instruction was on assessing student ability to pay attention and listen to oral discourse that would require students to respond to comprehension questions based on the stimuli given, deprived of particular strategy or skill for accomplishing such activities. Listening was also labelled as the "Cinderella skill" (Nunan, 1997) or the "deserted" skill (Dean, 2004). Field (2008) reported that



teachers focused more on speaking in the latter part of the twentieth century because mastery of the skill is believed to benefit students' long-term needs compared to other language skills. Teachers are often misled into believing that students learn and acquire language better when they are exposed to speaking lessons. However, past studies have revealed that it is insurmountable to attain speaking skills without displaying the ability to listen (Barker & Watson, 2000; Cao & Lin, 2020).

Listening skill is often underestimated and neglected, given the challenges they appear in acquiring a second language. The listening skill is less favoured, as supported by past studies (Carrier, 2003; Chen & Starosta, 2009; Ozeki, 2000; Siegel, 2014) based on the evidence that teaching listening activities do not include a proper methodology with appropriate planning as compared to other language skills. Past studies showed that more research had emphasised listening skills for about two decades when some of the studies emphasized learners' self-regulated and deep processing strategies to process the aural input received. The current situation warrants the importance of mastering listening and speaking skills to improve communication skills that will assist the students in developing social skills compulsory in an authentic setting. This study investigated the effects of metacognitive strategies on ESL students' listening comprehension.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the effects of

metacognitive strategies on ESL students' listening comprehension.

2. To discover whether there is any significant difference between male and female ESL students' performance in listening comprehension.
3. To determine ESL students' perceived challenges in mastering listening comprehension based on metacognitive strategies.

This research will answer the following research questions:

1. Is there an effect of treatments (with or without metacognitive strategies) on improving ESL students' listening comprehension?
2. Does gender influence the effect of treatments (with or without metacognitive strategies) on improving ESL students' listening comprehension?
3. What are the students' perceived challenges in employing metacognitive strategies to improve listening comprehension?

### Null Hypotheses

1. The metacognitive strategies have no significant effect on ESL students' listening comprehension.
2. There is no significant gender effect on ESL students' performance in listening comprehension.

Therefore, metacognitive strategies would be beneficial for students to complete their listening tasks. It also assists the students in overcoming any barriers or

issues at any stage of the listening process. Students need exposure to metacognitive strategies to activate selected mental operations while accomplishing the listening tasks. Goh (2002) explained that mental operations are the strategies transferred to the students to attain listening comprehension. Metacognitive strategies play an important role in second language learning. They allow students to monitor and regulate their thinking to activate knowledge and comprehension ability verbally and non-verbally.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Malaysian context, the teaching of English is more focused on reading and writing skills, mainly because these skills are tested in examinations (Sah & Shah, 2020; Gopal & Singh, 2020; Singh et al., 2017). It has led ESL students to place less importance on mastering listening skills. The listening component was not included and tested until late 2014 for the lower secondary examination (Krishnan & Kepol, 2013). However, the lower form examination format was changed to PT3, which included listening and speaking as important components to be assessed. Therefore, it is vital to find out what strategies teachers have incorporated for students to improve their listening comprehension abilities. Although the listening component was tested in the PT3 examination, students who continued to Form Six were required to sit for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) and still faced problems scoring good grades

for the (800/1) Listening paper in the test. Sah and Shah (2020) reported that students lack interest in listening comprehension due to their inability to use and apply appropriate vocabulary. Teachers habitually carry out direct teaching methods and rote learning when teaching listening comprehension. The researchers claimed that teachers' beliefs could help direct their instructional strategies, which should be reflected through teaching practices. Through the beliefs projected by the teachers, the teaching of listening skills can be improved to directly assist the ESL students in scoring good grades for passing the (800/1) Listening paper on the test. Students need good listening exercises to acquire listening skills. Mohana and Shamara (2012) found that teachers still believe that listening is not an important skill to be mastered at higher learning institutions. Teachers and students were not keen on focusing and mastering listening skills; instead, they opted for reading and writing skills because these two components have a higher percentage in the MUET examination.

### Malaysian University English Test (MUET)

The Malaysian Examination Council (MEC) introduced the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) in 1999. MUET, known as the language proficiency test, is administered by the Malaysian Examination Council (MEC) and taken by pre-university students to assess their level of English proficiency for entry requirements into local public universities. It is taken by pre-

university students, namely Diploma and Form 6 students. Students need the MUET examination and certificate to secure a place to study at any Malaysian university. Students who sit for the MUET are evaluated based on a 6-band system — with band 1 for the weakest proficiency level and band 5+ signifying the highest proficiency level. The maximum score possible is a band 6. The MUET certificate is only valid for five years from the date of the results slip. Students are required to re-sit the MUET once the validation date expires. Qualification in MUET is recognised in Malaysia and Singapore only (MUET, 2022). The MUET is a standardised language proficiency test that tests student ability to communicate in English across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All four skills are tested discretely, and a cumulative score is attained. Four main components are tested in the MUET test: 800/1 Listening, 800/2 Speaking, 800/3 Reading and 800/4 Writing. The MUET listening component comprised a small percentage (15%) in comparison to reading (40%), writing (30%) and speaking (15%). The MUET CEFR listening component is redesigned to assist the students in scoring better. There are thirty multiple-choice questions. Students can listen to each recording twice; each section consists of six questions. The present MUET CEFR listening component texts are easier to comprehend. The given listening texts range from A2 to B3 level of the CEFR. Despite revamping the listening component text based on the A2 to B3 range of the CEFR, students still have issues in answering the

paper as they lack the vocabulary and cannot activate good listening skills due to their low level of English proficiency.

### **Definition of Listening Comprehension**

Listening is an invisible mental process (Cao & Lin, 2020). The role of listening was studied by Ahmadi (2016), who agreed that listening is a tool learners use to aid language learning. Since then, listening has been fundamental in developing second language acquisition. Barker and Watson (2000) defined listening as ‘hearing, being attentive, comprehending and recalling,’ which includes behavioural and cognitive actions. Listening is also defined by Barker (1971) from four facets: Detecting, which discusses to process of receiving messages verbally and non-verbally; Interpreting, which explains the process of comprehending; Evaluating, which includes distinguishing fact from views and showing agreement or disagreement with speaker; Responding, directly involves expressing verbal and nonverbal signs in responding to information. Brown (1987) regarded listening as the process whereby listeners conclude an interpretation based on the information presented. As for listening comprehension, the listener has a greater task to do in which he or she must distinguish between sounds, recognise grammatical and ungrammatical structures, comprehend vocabulary in listening comprehension, explain intonation and stress, collect and remember all the information above to be interpreted with the social-cultural background of the utterance.

### **Definition of Meta-Cognitive Strategies**

Metacognition is the ability of knowledge to deliberately activate cognitive processes and products associated with them, such as the learning-related aspects of facts or information (Flavell, 1976, p. 232). Metacognitive processes are activation of cognition that assist in regulating one's thinking or learning. Metacognition is consciously applying the metacognitive ability to select, plan, evaluate, and revise cognitive aims, strategies, and goals. Past researchers have concluded that metacognitive strategies include self-planning, self-awareness, self-monitoring, self-regulation, and self-evaluation (Chamot & Rubin, 1994; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Anderson, 2002; Vandergrift, 2003; Thompson & Rubin, 1996). Metacognitive strategies are believed to improve student listening performance as indicated in the empirical evidence in past studies (e.g., O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 2003). Vandergrift (2003) implemented the practice of individual preparation, prediction, peer negotiation and discussion and post-listening reflections that build the development of metacognitive strategies in the novice beginner school context in France. Students were divided into two groups; the emphasis was on the benefits of predictions for successful and meaningful listening, the role of cooperation and teamwork with a peer for observing, and the development of confidence in the approach for promoting listening comprehension capability. O'Malley and Chamot (1990)

investigated the impact of metacognitive strategy among intermediate ESL high school students listening to presentations via metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. The second group received traditional instruction. Findings showed that, based on the test, the metacognitive group outperformed the cognitive group.

Teachers must guide students to develop and activate their metacognitive strategies. In other words, students need exposure to plan, track progress, monitor, evaluate, comprehend, and reflect upon what message is delivered through listening by applying prior knowledge of the information presented, discussed, and the ideas relayed verbally. The practice of metacognitive strategies has been established to guide students in assessing and monitoring their knowledge and comprehension ability verbally and non-verbally. Vandergrift (2003) investigated how strategies worked in fostering listening comprehension. It enabled the researcher to formulate a model of a skilled language listener. Vandergrift (2003) distinguished between good and poor listeners and concluded that this difference depends on the form of listening strategies applied. Good listeners depend less on translation and apply more metacognitive strategies, planning, questioning, and elaboration. Vandergrift (2003) recommended that teaching should be accompanied by strategic processing among effective and successful listeners (planning, assessing, monitoring, and evaluating).

### **Review of Studies on Listening Comprehension and Metacognitive Strategy Use**

According to Cao and Lin (2020), students need to be guided and taught to activate metacognitive strategies in listening. They investigated metacognitive strategies used in listening comprehension by a group of vocational students. Findings from the questionnaire showed that student ability to apply the metacognitive strategies in listening is relatively low. Female students exhibit a better ability to employ metacognitive strategies than male students. The metacognitive strategies include self-evaluation, self-regulation, planning, and monitoring. The findings revealed that students who attain a higher score apply these metacognitive strategies more regularly. Mohana and Shamara (2012) shared that the MUET results show that from 1999 to 2007, only 1% of the students scored the highest Band 5+, while another 50% obtained the two lowest competencies (Bands 1 and 2). This trend continued in 2009 and 2010 as more than half of the students scored the two lowest bands in all the MUET components.

Maton (2012) investigated factors behind poor performance by Bidayuh students in the MUET exam by distributing a questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985). The study showed that students were unclear and unaware of their attitudes and motivation towards learning English, which also explained their poor MUET test performance. The interview data

showed that students hardly prepared and studied independently for the MUET test, and they always depended on teacher input during attended classes to only discover its inefficiency. Krishnan and Kepol (2012) found that students exposed to explicit teaching on metacognitive strategies to improve listening comprehension performed better than students taught using the traditional method.

They reported that teachers should integrate metacognitive strategies as a valuable pedagogical method to enhance student listening comprehension. Christine (2002) investigated a discrete method incorporating metacognitive strategies for listening skills. Three main approaches were outlined: a) drafting, planning, and researching prior knowledge before class; b) listening for overall ideas, details, and the whole and aural test in class; c) writing a summary of the resources, monitoring and evaluation. She developed several ways for the metacognitive teaching model. Voon et al. (2019) investigated student needs to improve MUET performance and suggested that students' needs to learn English should be prioritised so that they can improve. Coskun (2010) studied metacognitive studies and their effects on the listening comprehension of English students. It was suggested that teachers integrate metacognitive strategies training into their instructional strategies to enhance student autonomy in learning. Applying metacognitive strategies can facilitate student independence and accountability for their learning, and consequently, students

are led to think about their thinking, which is the fundamental of metacognition.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, for the first and second objectives, a quantitative method was used by carrying out a quasi-experimental pre-and post-test design involving two subjects, an experimental group and a control group, to investigate the effect of metacognitive strategies and gender differences on ESL students' listening comprehension. For the third research objective, focus group interviews were conducted with the ESL students to get more information on how metacognitive strategies improved their listening comprehension. Sixty-two Lower Form Six students participated in this study and were selected based on a random sampling technique from two schools in the Seremban district. In this study, SPSS software was used to generate data from a *t*-test based on gender between students and exposure to the metacognitive strategies that the teachers embedded into instruction.

### Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with quantitative and qualitative methodologies of semi-structured interviews with focus groups.

### Population and Sampling

There are eight Form Six Schools in Seremban. Participants in this study are 1020 Seremban State Form 6 Lower students. Thirty-two Lower Form Six students were selected as the samples employing a basic random sampling procedure based on the table created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Respondents were selected mainly to achieve the study's purpose (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Sixty-two Lower Form Six students from two schools in one selected district were involved in this study based on a random sampling technique. A simple random sample procedure means every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected. This sampling technique was chosen as it was likely to produce a representative sample that avoids researcher bias in sample selection. Fifteen males and sixteen females were in the experimental group selected from school A. Eleven males and twenty females in the control group were selected from school B (Table 1). Leedy (1997) suggests that having a control group can strengthen validity. Cohen and Manion (1994) state that 31 students proposed in the control and treatment group is sufficient for statistical analysis. All these students have the same proficiency level.

Table 1  
*Profile of respondents*

	Respondent	Number	School	Total
Experimental group	Male	15	A	31
	Female	16		
Control group	Male	11	B	31
	Female	20		

Two teachers were assigned to teach the treatment and control groups. Teachers in this study were Teachers A and B, who had taught English and MUET for more than ten years. These teachers have experience marking the Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE 111/9). Hence, these teachers have the vast expertise and experience required for this study. The selected teacher has been applying the metacognitive strategies as teaching tools to teach listening skills in the treatment group. Teacher A who taught the experimental group, was given a training session on metacognitive strategies. As for Teacher B, she was asked to teach the control group using the traditional teaching method for the listening lesson.

### **Instruments**

The study consists of a pre-test and post-test instrument. A pre-test was given at the start of the treatment to the control and experimental groups. The post-test was administered after four weeks to both groups. The pre-test assessed the students' initial listening skills, while the latter was administered to measure the effect of metacognitive strategies on ESL students' listening comprehension. The listening test consists of 30 multiple-choice questions for the pre-test and the post-test to show their level of listening ability. Students could listen to each recording twice and answer six questions in each section.

### **Data Collection**

As for the intervention, metacognitive strategies were outlined in the lesson plans.

A thorough description of metacognitive strategies was communicated to Teacher A before the treatment began to confirm the standardisation of content and strategies to be taught. Teacher A was asked to follow the instruction on metacognitive strategies for assisting students with listening comprehension (Table 2).

Teacher B used her lesson plan for the control group to deliver the listening skills using the traditional teaching method. Nevertheless, the topic of the listening materials given for the experimental and control groups was the same to avoid issues of bias.

Goh (2008) has developed five guidelines (Table 2) based on three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge adapted from Flavell (1979), namely person knowledge: the technique learners acquire to listen and the aspects that influence one's listening; task knowledge: the nature and the demands of listening tasks and strategy knowledge: effective ways to acquire or complete a listening task. Next, Brown (1987) categorised the metacognitive strategies that have been applied effectively in L2 research to assist learners in developing self-regulation during listening, namely planning: defining and determining learning aims by selecting the means to achieve them; monitoring: confirming the development of recounting the listening progress and evaluating: deciding the effort accomplished at analysing oral input or the result of a plan for cultivating listening capabilities. Table 2 describes the guidelines for listening based on the metacognitive strategies. During the

Table 2

*Guidelines for implementing metacognitive strategies in second language learning from Goh (2008)*

Guidelines	Activities
Guideline 1 <b>Pre-listening Activities</b>	In groups, students activate their schemata to predict the content of the listening text. Then, students will write down the words, phrases, sentences, images, maps or diagrams as they hear to guess the theme.
Guideline 2 <b>Brainstorming</b>	Students will make notes and underline those words or phrases (including images, maps or diagrams) before they share their ideas with other groups.
Guideline 3 <b>Group-process based discussion</b>	In groups, students draw semantic webs to transfer ideas focusing on the relationships to show their understanding.
Guideline 4 <b>Task knowledge – Second listen</b>	Students will listen and check the relevance and accuracy of understanding against old and new information. They will distinguish parts that lead to confusion and disagreement and take down notes based on the text that needs specific attention.
Guideline 5 <b>Evaluation based discussion</b>	The teacher started the discussion to check the comprehension before discussing the effectiveness of strategies for learning and practice employed by the students.

pre-listening activity, the teacher will guide students to activate their schemata by asking them to predict the content or theme of the listening text. The next stage will involve students brainstorming ideas in monitoring their listening by taking down notes to confirm the addition of new information. Then the group undergoes group-process-based discussion where students will be asked to transfer ideas to show their understanding. Next, students listen and classify confusion or problem areas, and finally, the teacher will guide them toward comprehension and the metacognitive strategies practised.

For the treatment group, the intervention is given in the form of metacognitive strategies described clearly to them. First, a step-by-step guided listening lesson employing metacognitive strategies was demonstrated as the teacher followed the

strategies given before, while and after listening. The students were also trained to apply metacognitive strategies. Then, after four weeks, a focus group semi-structured interview was conducted with the experimental group students to get feedback and details about their views on exposure to metacognitive strategies to chart their listening skill progress.

### Data Analysis

**For Pre-Test and Post-Test.** Data from the pre-test and post-test from the control and experimental groups were analysed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0. The mean score and standard deviation were also calculated based on the pre-test and post-test scores. A *t*-test analysis was done to uncover any significant differences in mean scores between the pre-test and post-test of the metacognitive



strategies given in the experimental group and the traditional teaching method in the control group.

For semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data obtained. Thematic analysis was selected due to its flexible nature, which allows for analysis in various ways (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

## RESULTS

The first research question asked:

- 1) Is there an effect of treatments (with or without metacognitive strategies) on improving ESL students' listening comprehension?

Results obtained from the paired-sample *t*-test for the Experimental Group provided the answer to this question.

As shown in Table 3, the paired samples *t*-test yielded a *t* of 6.850, which was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the listening comprehension post-test means were significantly higher than the corresponding pre-test means among the experimental group students.

Table 4 shows that the paired samples *t*-test could not compute the *t* given that "the standard error of the difference is 0," as given in its statistical output. Hence, it indicates that the listening comprehension post-test means were similar to the corresponding pre-test means among the control group students.

The independent samples *t*-test yielded a *t* of 0.339, which was not statistically significant;  $t(60) = 0.339, p = .736 > .05$  (Table 5). It indicates that the experimental group (19.10) and the control group (18.94)

Table 3  
Results obtained from paired-sample *t*-test for the experimental group

Experimental Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair	Pre-test	31	19.10	1.85	6.850	.000
	Post-test	31	22.45	2.54		

Table 4  
Results obtained from paired-sample *t*-test for the control group

Control Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair	Pre-test	31	18.94	1.90	.34	*	*
	Post-test	31	18.94	1.90	.34		

\* *t* cannot be computed because the standard error of the difference is 0.

Table 5  
Results obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for pre-test by group

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental	31	19.10	1.85	.339	.736
Control	31	18.94	1.90		

did not differ significantly in listening comprehension pre-test means. Therefore, the null hypothesis (i.e., there is no significant effect of the metacognitive strategies on ESL students' listening comprehension) was rejected.

The *t*-test yielded a *t* of 6.175, which was statistically significant:  $t(60) = 6.175$ ,  $p < .001$  (Table 6). These results suggest that the experimental group's listening comprehension post-test mean (22.45) was statistically significantly higher than the mean obtained by the control group (18.94). Therefore, the null hypothesis (i.e., there is no significant effect of the metacognitive strategies on ESL students' listening comprehension) is rejected.

Does gender influence the effect of treatments (with or without metacognitive strategies) on improving ESL students' listening comprehension?

The *t*-test yielded a *t* of .628, which was not statistically significant:  $t(60) = 0.628$ ,  $p = .533 > .05$  (Table 7). It indicates no significant difference between the listening comprehension post-test means obtained by the male students (20.96) and

the female students (20.50). Therefore, the null hypothesis (i.e., there is no significant gender effect on ESL students' performance in listening comprehension) is accepted. Accordingly, it can be inferred that there is no gender effect on ESL students' listening comprehension. In other words, regardless of gender, if a student is exposed to metacognitive strategies, his or her listening comprehension will improve.

Students perceived challenges in the usage of metacognitive strategies to improve listening comprehension.

### Planning Stage

Findings from the students' focus group showed that they felt more confident answering listening comprehension questions using the metacognitive strategies they were taught. Student A mentioned that he always feels anxious answering the listening comprehension questions because of his inability to grasp and understand word meanings. He expressed that he was carefully taught how to strategise to have a proper plan on what to focus on before he listens. Student A said prior knowledge

Table 6  
Results obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for post-test by group

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental	31	22.45	2.54	6.175	.000
Control	31	18.94	1.90		

Table 7  
Results obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for post-test by gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	26	20.96	3.24	.628	.533
Female	36	20.50	2.55		

or background information is crucial to comprehend the topic. It was supported by student B, who mentioned that failure to grasp the meaning and needing prior background knowledge could be a problem in getting the appropriate answers for the listening test.

### **Guessing and Predicting the Content**

The students shared that when the teacher asked them to activate their schemata to identify the content or theme of the listening text, it facilitated answering the listening comprehension questions. Students A, B, C and D concur that writing down the words or phrases can help them remember important points later when they must select the correct answer. However, they did not deny that practising the metacognitive strategies was quite challenging as they had to consider other factors, such as time, anxiety, and the fear of answering the questions wrongly can cause them to make mistakes while listening to the text. In addition, underlining keywords, reading and rereading the questions with limited time, and relating to background knowledge require great planning. Student E shared that she focused on each word, phrase, and sentence carefully to ensure she got all the important points. She emphasised the importance of writing down the general point and other related points to the given listening text.

### **Monitoring**

All the students expressed that they had difficulties identifying the problems when

they were instructed to listen and answer the comprehension questions. First, they mentioned they had to understand the requirement of the listening task. Next, they must listen carefully for details and infer information. The teacher-guided this step before the experiment began. They also shared that they must monitor their comprehension progress as they listen to develop their listening capability. Another issue they encountered was in terms of grasping linguistic abilities and also vocabulary. Three students (students B, E and F) shared that comprehending the listening task became more difficult when they were unsure what to notice or whether to focus on difficult words, the gist of the text or the keywords. This dimension was highlighted by Flavell (1979) that students must understand task knowledge that focuses on the demands of listening tasks.

### **Evaluation**

These students (A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, J, K) shared that they merely answered the listening comprehension questions without applying any strategies before this. They applied these strategies after the teacher's guidance. They expressed that carefully analysing and evaluating the listening text can assist them in monitoring listening comprehension. When the students apply these strategies, they become more confident and accountable to take charge and self-regulate their learning. Evaluation and strategic knowledge assist students in realigning the goals of the listening task and chart plan to monitor their listening

capability. Some of these students (L, M, O) said that it is difficult to monitor and evaluate these strategies as they depend on memorising points.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Application of the Three Dimensions of the Metacognitive Knowledge**

This study reports the metacognitive knowledge and the metacognitive strategies used by the students based on the training given. The students applied the three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge: person, task, and strategic. As for metacognitive knowledge, the students employed the planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies beneficial for assisting students in developing self-regulation during listening. These results align with results of past studies (e.g., Al-Alwan et al., 2013; Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Carrier, 2003; Goh, 2008; Vandergrift, 2003) showing that metacognitive strategies, when guided and trained appropriately to students assist in improving their listening comprehension capability. The results show that ESL students with proper guidance on metacognitive strategies are quick to learn and will know when to apply them. Teachers must stress the key role of listening skills in L2 acquisition. Listening skill demands equal importance with other skills for effective oral communication.

### **Activation of the Metacognitive Strategies**

Students are not taught to work and improve their listening skills. As a result, they have

issues activating the appropriate strategies for listening comprehension. They become nervous when they know they risk failure to perform well in the listening activities. They fear negative comments from peers and teachers. As a result, students struggle to regulate their learning goals and cannot chart progress for listening comprehension. They know that they must listen harder to get the scores. This situation is apparent in the Malaysian education system as the students opt for rote learning and prepare merely for examination purposes. Thus, they neglect and put less emphasis on listening comprehension. Nevertheless, listening skill is important for students to develop effective communication. Teachers must equip students and find ways to involve students actively by exposing them to metacognitive strategies for teaching listening (Vandergrift, 2003; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Teaching listening to ESL learners has been revisited using metacognitive strategies. Past studies have revealed that incorporating these strategies can enhance ESL students' listening comprehension. The findings of this study show that applying metacognitive strategies will significantly influence ESL student listening comprehension. The findings imply that students need sufficient guidance to ensure mastery of listening comprehension skills in acquiring a second language. When teachers neglect the teaching of listening, students do not perform well in academics. Implementing these strategies requires effort and collaboration from both

teachers and students. Teachers can motivate students in various ways. Although teaching students to listen can be challenging, students need proper guidance and support to succeed in mastering listening skills. The present study was conducted with Sixty-Two Lower Form Six students from two schools in Seremban district, Malaysia.

Further research can be carried out with more participants to explore the effect of metacognitive strategies on students at the tertiary level. However, the significant findings in this study show that students' immense engagement in mastering the metacognitive strategies can facilitate them in improving their listening comprehension capability, specifically in the second language learning contexts. Conversely, students not exposed to these metacognitive strategies will struggle to master listening comprehension, impacting their academic performance.

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**The Mediating Role of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies in the Development of Social Behavior among Adolescents**

**Samsilah Roslan<sup>1\*</sup>, Noorhayati Zakaria<sup>2</sup>, Siaw Yan-Li<sup>3</sup> and Noorlila Ahmad<sup>1</sup>**

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*List of Table/Figure: Table 1.*

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**Vol. 30 (S1) 2022**

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