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Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition

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Contents

Preface (<i>Jolanta Latkowska, Adam Wojtaszek</i>)	
--	--

Eihab Abu-Rabiah

The Minds Behind SLA: Insights from Leading Scholars—Stuart Webb	
--	--

Articles

Helén Egerhag, John Rack

Intervention and Transfer Effects in Reading Interventions for Second Language Students: A Systematic Scoping Review	
---	--

Despina Giouvanou, Marianthi Karatsiori

Recreating Home Literacy in the Classroom: Emergent L2 Reading in Young Greek Learners of English	
--	--

Sahal R. Alshammari, Sarah Saud Alharbi

<i>Click</i> or <i>Chalk</i> : Comparing EFL Reading Outcomes in Saudi Education.	
---	--

**Trinh Quoc Lap, Ta Phuong Thinh, Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, Le Thanh Thao,
Le Cong Tuan**

Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Stimulating Student Engagement: A Mixed-Methods Exploration Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory.	
--	--

Şafak Uçmaz

Language Teachers' Well-Being from the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory Perspective: A Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling Approach	
--	--

Daniel Márquez

Motivation to Learn L2 Pragmatic Features	
---	--

Claudia V. Tapia Castillo
Disentangling English Language Motivation: A Study of Motivational Factors
and the Interplay with Mindsets in Chilean Secondary Students

Agnieszka Kaleta
Balanced vs. Skewed Input in L2 Argument Construction Learning:
A Replication and Extension of Casenhiser and Goldberg (2005)

Olha Luchenko, Olha Doronina, Lena Králiková Hashimoto
Japanese Native-Speaker Teachers’ Use of English in JFL Classrooms:
A Comparative Study Across Non-Anglophone Countries Worldwide

Le Vo Gia Nghi, Nguyen Thi Quyen
Resolution of English Pronouns by Vietnamese EFL Learners

Style Guide for the Authors.



Preface

Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition (TAPSLA) is a peer-reviewed journal published twice a year by the University of Silesia Press. Established in 2015, the journal has been indexed in Scopus since 2018, as well as in other major databases, including Index Copernicus and ERIH PLUS. *TAPSLA* operates under an open-access model: authors incur no publication fees, readers face no access charges, and all issues are freely available for download from the journal's website (www.tapsla.us.edu.pl).

The journal aims to disseminate research on second language acquisition, bilingualism and multilingualism, along with related psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, cognitive, and teaching approaches. It foregrounds contemporary theoretical developments and advances in research methodology, while also engaging with historical perspectives in the field. Publishing in English, *TAPSLA* welcomes submissions that represent diverse language combinations and a wide range of educational and cultural contexts, in line with its mission to promote innovation and collaboration among Polish and international scholars.

Volume 12, Issue 1 of *TAPSLA* continues “The Minds Behind SLA: Insights from Leading Scholars,” a recently introduced section that explores the intellectual journeys of leading researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through informal interviews. By shifting the focus from published findings to the often unseen paths that lead to them, the section offers a rare glimpse into the creative academic mindset and serves as a source of inspiration for researchers from across SLA disciplines, institution types, and career stages. This installment features Stuart Webb, whose work on L2 vocabulary pedagogy has pushed the frontiers of our understanding of the complexities of language learning. The section is edited by Eihab Abu-Rabiah.

The articles in the present issue revolve around key dimensions of L2 acquisition, use, and teaching, including L2 literacy and input characteristics, teacher development and well-being, and learner motivation. Each article addresses a clearly defined research gap—one that is relevant to the authors' linguistic, educational, and sociocultural contexts—and, in doing so, provides state-of-the-art analyses of current research problems and new ideas for future research. Taken together, the articles reflect the global nature of contemporary

SLA research, with insights drawn from settings as diverse as Vietnam, Chile, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and Türkiye.

We are hopeful that these contributions will be of interest to both new and returning readers of *TAPSLA* and express our appreciation to all contributing authors and reviewers for the rigour and scholarly expertise demonstrated in their work. We also take this opportunity to encourage researchers from Poland and from the wider international academic community to continue publishing their findings in the journal.

Sincerely,

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The Minds Behind SLA: Insights from Leading Scholars—Stuart Webb

Stuart Webb is Professor at Western University's Faculty of Education and specializes in second language acquisition. With a PhD in Applied Linguistics, he has taught English as a foreign language and applied linguistics internationally for many years. His research investigates practical questions like how many words are needed to understand TV, how often words must be encountered to be learned, and which words are most valuable for students. Prof. Webb has authored books on vocabulary research and published over 100 papers in top journals.

Your paper “The Effects of Repetition on Vocabulary Knowledge” has been influential in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. Could you define the specific area of SLA that it falls under and describe what initially led you to explore this topic?

This study falls within the areas of (a) L2 vocabulary studies and (b) frequency effects on SLA. This was the first study that I conducted in my PhD research. The motivation for the research was to follow up earlier studies that looked at frequency effects on L2 vocabulary research but expand upon those studies by measuring gains in different aspects of vocabulary knowledge that were rarely assessed. Until that time, the norm was to only measure knowledge of form-meaning connection. I measured knowledge of orthographic form, association, collocation, and grammatical functions in addition to form-meaning connection. I was interested in learning how these different types of vocabulary knowledge developed and whether the gains in each type of knowledge would be similar.

Could you recommend key resources—such as textbooks, papers, or other materials—that would be particularly beneficial for graduate

students and scholars looking to explore and deepen their understanding of this area of interest?

I think that the most useful starting points for those interested in learning about researching vocabulary are the key textbooks in this area. For me, those books are Nation's (2022) *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, *How Vocabulary is Learned* (Webb & Nation, 2017), and *The Routledge Handbook of Vocabulary Studies* (Webb, 2020). Nation's (2022) book provides a comprehensive account of the applications of studies of vocabulary to teaching and learning over the last fifty years. *How Vocabulary is Learned* (Webb & Nation, 2017) is a more reader-friendly book that discusses key areas of vocabulary studies that relate to pedagogy. *The Routledge Handbook of Vocabulary Studies* (2020) is particularly useful for researchers because it highlights many different topics for studies of vocabulary, each discussed by key researchers in the field. For those planning to conduct research on vocabulary, I would also strongly recommend Schmitt's (2010) *Researching Vocabulary* and Nation and Webb's (2011) *Researching and Analysing Vocabulary*.

What is one prevalent misconception about second language (L2) acquisition, teaching, or assessment that you've encountered in your work?

First, I think that it is important to understand that what is suggested by researchers for classroom learning may not necessarily be implemented by teachers. It takes time for research findings to reach program developers and Ministries of Education. There are topics of vocabulary research that have been discussed among researchers hundreds of times over decades that teachers in many areas may still be unaware of. Finding a way to help apply research findings to pedagogy is a challenge that needs to be figured out. However, I think there is often an assumption among researchers that their findings have all been implemented into the classroom, which is problematic when that is not the reality.

Second, perhaps what is most important for research students is learning how to evaluate research methodology and findings rather than relying on the conclusions of researchers. The claims made by researchers may not necessarily be correct. Recently, I have found that some researchers make claims that are not supported by their findings and the research literature. If students assume that the researcher's claims are correct, then that may cause problems down the road if they focus on these claims in their own research. Developing the ability to evaluate research methodology and results allows students (and researchers) to rely on their own knowledge to make key decisions.

How do you see the field of SLA and L2 teaching evolving in the coming years, particularly with the emergence of AI and other technological advancements?

Changes in technology will always affect research and teaching to some degree. However, it probably does not happen quite as quickly as researchers might suggest. One reason for this is that researchers and teachers tend to be

older and slower adopters of technological advancements. For example, television has been around for a long time, but it is only in recent years that it is starting to gain some traction as a source of L2 input for researchers to investigate. Moreover, audiovisual input still plays a relatively minor role in classroom learning. Recent technological innovation such as AI will be the focus on new research, but I am not sure if it will make much impact on research or teaching in the next few years.

How do you typically develop a research idea?

There are always many possible research topics, so it is important to be patient, consider the different options and choose carefully. Most graduate student research fails to get published. This means that it is only read by the supervisor and the examiners. If a student is going to work on a research project for two to four years, I hope that their effort will lead to something that many people can learn from. Not all topics are likely to succeed in publication. Therefore, it is best to take things slowly and evaluate the justification for each topic. I have seen quite a few students fall in love with a topic that is unlikely to generate interest and lead to publication. Thus, it is important to be flexible about research ideas. It is important that the student selects a topic that they are interested in, but it is equally important that the topic is worthy of investigation. Reading as much as possible is key before deciding on a topic so that it is grounded in the literature.

Could you share a transformative moment in your academic journey?

Before applying to PhD programs, I spent about a year thinking about topics. Eventually, I felt that I had a great idea for my PhD research and that this research would be impactful and publishable. When I was applying to programs, I found that Professor Paul Nation was coming to my city to give a presentation, and I arranged to meet him. I was excited to tell him about my idea for research and was hopeful that he would be interested in accepting me as his PhD student. When I told him about my idea, he listened carefully and thought about it for a minute after which he told me he thought it was a great idea. He then told me that he could see me setting it up as a series of studies that involved looking at how different activities contributed to different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. I was very happy to hear that he was willing to be my PhD supervisor, but I was also surprised by his interpretation of my proposed research topic, which was quite different from what I had imagined. However, I understood that he knew much more about researching vocabulary than I did and I happily followed the direction he suggested. In retrospect, I can see that my initial idea was not a good one. Having the opportunity to listen and learn from Paul Nation was the transformative moment in my academic journey.

What is the most important key trait you have noticed in successful scholars, and why?

I believe the most important key traits in successful scholarship are (a) having a very strong understanding of research methodology, and (b) being efficient. Methodology is at the heart of research. You need to have a sound research design to have valid results. Other aspects of a study such as the literature review and discussion can be revised. However, if there are problems with the results, the value of the research is limited because the findings lack validity.

I believe that successful scholars also tend to be extremely efficient. Efficiency is extremely important because there are many demands on your time in an academic career and as you become more successful, the demands tend to increase. It is best to get manuscripts written and submitted in a timely fashion, because there are always other research projects to complete.

What advice would you give to early-career researchers looking to make a meaningful impact in the field of SLA?

Do not rush research. Quality research takes time. It takes time to develop knowledge and expertise through comprehensive reading. It takes time to find good research questions, and it is worth taking the time to carefully design the study to ensure that you have valid results. When developing a study, look for good models of research design in top-tier research journals such as *Language Learning* and *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. These two journals provide useful models of research designs because their articles tend to be longer to ensure that there is sufficient detail provided in the methodology sections to allow readers to understand and evaluate the research.

Is there anything important you would like to add that our previous questions did not address?

I credit any success that I have had as a scholar to having an amazing PhD supervisor (Paul Nation) and outstanding students to supervise such as Zhouhan Jin, Su Kyung Kim, Akifumi Yanagisawa, Takumi Uchihara, Thi Ngoc Yen Dang, Michael Rodgers, Tatsuya Nakata, and Yosuke Sasao. For students finding a supervisor who is an expert in the area they are interested in is key. Having manuscripts rejected by journals should be expected. However, if your supervisor has a successful track record of publication in top journals and believes in the quality of your research, then you are more likely to persevere and resubmit when rejections inevitably occur.

Having manuscripts rejected should be expected. Most of my early articles were rejected multiple times. What is important is to learn from those rejections. Reviewers are not necessarily correct with all their criticisms. However, there is usually something to be learned from reviews. I am sure my writing and research improved through going through the review process and having many tough rejections.

Quick-fire preferences:

Teaching or research? I love both.

Long-term projects or short-term studies? Short-term studies.

Methodology-driven research or theory-driven research? Methodology-driven research. I love the challenge of investigating a topic in new ways.

Writing or data analysis? Originally data analysis but in recent years, writing.

Writing in silence or with background voices? Writing in silence. I am a procrastinator, so I need to write with no distractions.

Reading digital or printed books? Digital.

Small or big conference? I love both if they are in person.

Early bird or night owl? Definitely a night owl. I wrote my PhD thesis between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. It is hard to procrastinate at 3 a.m!

Summer or winter? I look forward to all the seasons.

City or countryside? City to live in, but countryside to hike or relax.

Coffee or tea? I love both, but coffee tends to power my writing.

September 2, 2025

Note: This interview was conducted via email. The responses are presented in Stuart Webb's natural manner of expression, with minor stylistic edits for clarity and flow.

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Intervention and Transfer Effects in Reading Interventions for Second Language Students: A Systematic Scoping Review

Abstract

This review presents findings from reading intervention studies of L2 students, with a particular focus on: students learning a second language other than English, students learning English who have first languages other than Spanish, and intervention studies which address the issue of transfer of gains made in one language to outcomes in another. Twenty-two studies conducted between 2008 and 2023 with learners of school age were identified using the PICOS and PRISMA Flow Diagram procedures. A clear implication from this review is that intervention studies concerning learning to read in a second language remain a relatively under-researched area which is dominated by studies on learning to read in English. The studies identified in this review suggest that, regardless of the learners' L1, additional small-group or in-class programs targeting phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and word decoding can produce accelerated and sustained gains in L2 reading, in comparison to “treatment as usual.” Relatively little evidence is available about interventions for older students learning to read in different first languages or about interventions to improve comprehension. Mixed evidence was found concerning the transfer of training effects from one language to another, with typically higher effects for phonological awareness, and letter-sound knowledge compared to comprehension. The finding that reading skills, especially phonological awareness, and letter-sound knowledge, can transfer from one language to another has important implications for policy and practice. We discuss the challenges of attempting to synthesize studies in this area and identify practical implications.

Keywords: word decoding, reading comprehension, second language, transfer, intervention

Reading Interventions in a Second Language

This review concerns the question of how to best teach students who are learning to read in a second language at school and has a focus on intervention studies which seek to measure the effectiveness of different methods. The literature on students with Spanish as a first language who are learning English in school is extensive and will be summarized later, but less is known about those who have other first and second language combinations. Therefore, this scoping review looks to see what evidence is emerging regarding interventions for learning to read with different first and second language combinations and considers, in particular, the issue of cross-language transfer effects.

Although there are issues in data collection, there is an accepted view that between 50% and 70% of the world's population are bilingual, defined as those who use two or more languages in their everyday lives (Grosjean, 2021). In the USA, 23% of the population are thought to speak another language at home as well as to be proficient in English (ACS, 2018; Grosjean, 2021) and figures given by Eurostat for 2016 show that 24,8% of the working population in Europe know a second language to a proficient level. Finding effective methods for L2 reading teaching has become important in many countries because of recent new arrivals (including refugees and asylum-seekers) and because of the greater number of children born to families where the home language is different from the language used in the school.

The focus of our review is on interventions to improve reading; we are not concerned with second language learning in general, although there is an overlap and some reading interventions look at outcomes in spoken as well as written language skills. A second language (L2) is defined here as one that differs from the main language spoken at home (L1), and in this review, we are concerned with situations where that second language is also the language of instruction in school, as is the situation for newly-arrived students. Frequently used terms for these learners are Language Minority (LM), second language learners, additional language learners, emergent bilingual or dual language learners. Studies which look at foreign language learning as a subject in school are not included in this review. It must be acknowledged that there are issues in determining L1 and L2 status. For example, some children grow up with parents who have different first languages both of which may be used at home; and a third language may be used in school and with their peer group. Similarly, if children are exposed to bilingual education in schools and two languages at home, it can be difficult to determine which is their L1 and which is their L2. Our practice in this review is to follow the definitions used by the authors and in most cases use the term L2 learners.

Reading According to ‘The Simple View of Reading’

The Simple View of Reading (SVR) was first described by Gough and Tunmer (1986) and Hoover and Gough (1990) and has remained an influential and useful framework in studies of reading with both first and second language learners (Garcia & Cain, 2014; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Nation, 2019; Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2012). The SVR sees reading comprehension as being determined by two components: decoding and linguistic comprehension which combine in a multiplicative way. This means that if either factor is zero, then the product, that is, the overall reading comprehension will be zero. Decoding refers to the identification of words through letter-to-sound conversion or sight recognition, while linguistic comprehension encompasses understanding the meaning of the words, sentences, and the overall text. Extensions to the SVR have been proposed reflecting the need to consider additional factors such as topic interest, reading strategy use, and working memory (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Duke and Cartwright (2021) describe an Active View of Reading model where word decoding and reading comprehension overlap in what they term bridging processes that include morphological awareness and print concepts. Research within the context of the SVR has supported the view that decoding skills are the more limiting factor in the early stages of reading development, but that later development of reading comprehension depends more on language comprehension skills (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Lervåg, Hulme, & Melby-Lervåg, 2018; Lonigan, Burgess, & Schatschneider, 2018).

The term decoding in the SVR refers to both recoding from a print-based form to a sound-based form and recoding from a print form to a meaning-based form. These two alternatives are sometimes referred to as letter-sound decoding and sight-word recognition and form the basis of the well-known dual-route model of (single word) reading and variations on this (e.g., Castles & Coltheart, 2004). Models of the development of single word reading skills in English propose that learners move through phases where their relative reliance on sight-word recognition and letter-to-sound decoding processes varies (Ehri, 1991). Likewise, the reliance on these two kinds of processes varies in different languages with letter-sound decoding processes playing a more prominent role in alphabetic languages. The Orthographic Depth Hypothesis (Katz & Frost, 1992) proposes that, in an alphabetic script, it is easier to read in a shallower, or more transparent orthography, where the relationship between printed letters and sounds is more consistent, compared to a deeper one. Thus, for alphabetic scripts, the ease of learning to read is affected by both the transparency and the structure of the language (Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, 2003; Devonshire, Morris, & Fluck, 2013). English is considered to be a language with deep orthography, and many words have to be learned “by sight.” Spanish, like Italian and Finnish,

has a more transparent script and a more regular syllabic structure, and Swedish is intermediate (Seymour et al., 2003).

Cross-Language Influence in Reading

Gottardo, Chen, and Huo (2021) have reviewed evidence on cross-language influence in reading and language development. This is often interpreted in terms of the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979) which proposes that language proficiency in L1 can support the development of L2 and vice versa. The formulations of this hypothesis have been reworked and updated over the years, but the theory remains relevant (Cummins, 2021). The Linguistic Interdependent Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981; 2021) proposes that experience with one language leads to the development of Common Underlying Linguistic Proficiencies which can be applied to a second language once proficiency in the first language has reached a certain level. Thus, L2 students have additional influences on their learning related to their proficiency in their first language (August & Shanahan, 2006), and these influences can also be reciprocal. Koda (2008) proposed that cross-language facilitation occurs because of the development of metalinguistic awareness, especially in terms of phonology and morphology. In line with this, the potential for cross-language influences is likely to vary depending on the similarity between languages in terms of the script, orthographic depth, and syllabic structure (Chung, Chen, & Geva, 2019; Katz & Frost, 1992; Koda, 2008; Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011).

As well as possible differences due to the nature of the language being learned, there are likely to be differences depending on the learners' existing knowledge and skills in both spoken and written language. Thus, older students with well-established first language vocabulary or well-established L1 reading skills may show different transfer effects in comparison to younger learners whose first language skills are continuing to develop, perhaps only slightly ahead of their second language skills. Cummins proposed that relatively well-developed L1 knowledge is necessary for there to be transfer effects, but there is a possibility of transfer (and interactive effects) for younger learners, as a number of cross-language correlational studies have shown (see Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011). Furthermore, Goodrich and Lonigan (2017) have shown in a cross-language analysis that code-based skills such as phonological awareness and print knowledge tended to be language-independent, whereas other linguistic skills related to vocabulary and comprehension tended to be language-specific and thus not transferable. Lipka et al. (2005) point out that even if the writing systems are the same, the opportunities for transfer may vary. For example, if a student has experience with a more transparent orthography with predictable grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the first language, this

may give opportunities for positive transfer to a language with a more opaque orthography such as English.

Reading Interventions for L2 Students

The evidence base concerning reading interventions in an L2 is more limited than that for L1 students, but evidence of effective practice has been developing, and a number of meta-analyses and best-practice reviews have been published in recent years. These, however, are almost exclusively concerned with those learning English who have Spanish as their first language. The main findings from these reviews will be presented below to provide context for later comparison and to identify potential research gaps.

On the whole, there is good evidence for the effectiveness of interventions focusing on foundation skills and less consistent evidence concerning outcomes in reading and listening comprehension. For example, Ludwig, Guo, and Georgiou (2019) presented findings from 26 intervention studies and found large effects on reading accuracy outcomes, large effects on reading fluency outcomes, and moderate effects on reading comprehension outcomes. In a recent meta-analysis, Murphy Odo (2021) looked at studies that targeted either word reading or pseudoword (nonword) reading in English as L2. Overall, phonological awareness and phonics instruction had a moderate effect on L2 word reading and a large effect on pseudo-word reading, and effect sizes were generally similar for participants with alphabetic and logographic L1 writing systems.

A number of reviews have looked in particular at the evidence for the effectiveness of reading interventions for English language learners who have been identified as having or being at risk of having reading difficulties. Solari et al. (2022) looked at the effects of reading interventions in grades K-5 and found moderate effect sizes for a range of outcomes. In line with this, Roberts et al. (2022) found moderate effect sizes for foundation skills for interventions given to students in grades K-3. Similar conclusions were drawn by Richards-Tutor, Baker, Gersten, Baker, and Smith (2016) who found moderate-to-large effect sizes for interventions targeting beginning reading skills or reading comprehension.

The issues of differences due to the types of interventions and the age of the learners have been addressed in a number of reviews. Graham, Silva, and Restrepo (2022) found small effects on reading outcomes across all grades from preschool to grade 12, however, there was variability in effects associated with type and duration of the interventions. Hall, Steinle, and Vaughn (2019) presented findings from four research syntheses including interventions in Grades 1 to 8 (August & Siegel, 2006; Klinger et al., 2006; Rivera et al., 2009; Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). They found consistent evidence for the effectiveness

of multiple-component interventions, which included phonological awareness and phonics instruction. However, again, studies varied considerably in terms of the research designs and populations studied which made generalization challenging. The authors concluded that there is a need for future research which provides more detail about the participants, and which considers how interventions target students' individual needs in multitiered systems of support. They also called for more studies of interventions to improve reading comprehension. Rivera, Moughamian, Lesaux, and Francis (2009) also recommend that interventions for students in Grades K to 12 should address multiple components of reading including phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, academic vocabulary, and comprehension. Cheung and Slavin (2012) looked at the effects of different interventions for Spanish-dominant English language learners in Elementary schools and found positive effects in favor of students who were taught reading in bilingual classes compared to English immersion classes, although the effect size was modest when comparing to monolingual programs.

Consistent with Hall et al. (2019), Ludwig et al. (2019) highlight the problem of heterogeneity of participants and intervention components when attempting to synthesize studies. In addition, Hall et al. (2019) recommended that future studies should focus on the role of transfer from one language to another and focus on participants learning a second language other than English, or those learning English with a first language other than Spanish. Gottardo et al. (2021) also call for more research on transfer with different L1 and L2 combinations.

Aim and Research Questions

In this review, the aim is to explore some of the abovementioned research gaps and focus in particular on what is known about learning to read with different combinations of first and second languages, and what is known about the effects of interventions in one language on outcomes in another language. The study uses a scoping review methodology to address the following main questions:

RQ 1: What is the evidence concerning reading interventions for L2 students at school age in different second languages, and what evidence is available about the relevance of different first languages?

RQ2: What evidence may be found about the transfer of gains made in one language to improved outcomes in another?

Method

This review is a scoping review rather than a meta-analysis. A scoping review aims to identify and synthesize evidence and knowledge systematically

and summarize results with the main aim of giving an overview of what has been published in a topic area or in a field. The scoping review also aims to map concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research through a systematic search, selection, and synthesis of existing knowledge (Lookwood & Tricco, 2020). A scoping review can include studies with various designs and make use of search protocols in an iterative fashion (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017).

For the current review, a systematic search was done using the PRISMA flow chart method (PRISMA, 2020) for the identification, screening, and selection of articles (see Figure 1). Three well-known and reliable databases were chosen because of their access to research in the fields of education, psychology, second language acquisition, and related disciplines. The databases were ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center), LLBA (Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts), and the American Psychological Association's Psych Info (covering behavioral science and mental health).

The search process was developed over a number of iterations and updated in response to feedback from the first draft of this paper. Two main searches were done, beginning with one on the 22nd of May 2022 and supplemented by an updated search which looked at more recent studies (up to September 30th, 2023), and which broadened the criteria to include interventions that addressed any aspect of reading. Finally, this broader search was used to look again at earlier publications but was limited to those done after 2008. This final search was conducted separately for each of the three databases utilizing the thesaurus (keyword) and filter functions specific to each database.

The search string was developed from three clusters of concepts. One cluster was associated with interventions using search words "intervention," OR "instruction," OR "enhance," OR "develop," OR "teaching," OR "training." A second cluster concerned reading processes with search words "decoding," OR "word decoding," OR "word recognition," OR "reading accuracy," OR "orthography," OR "phonics," OR "letter/sound," OR "phoneme/grapheme" OR "reading comprehension," OR "vocabulary," OR "morphology." The third concerned second language learning: "second language," OR "L2," OR "second language acquisition," OR "multilanguage." Conjugations and plural forms of the search words were also included when possible. The searches were limited to articles written in English.

Screening

The searches retrieved 6538 records, as shown in the PRISMA flow chart (PRISMA, 2020) (see Figure 1). From this stage, the online resource Rayyan (2023) was used to facilitate the screening process. Rayyan helps to find duplicates and to collaborate between researchers, to organize and mark the

articles in a systematic manner independent of each other. 901 of the articles were found to be duplicates, which left a total of 5637 articles. Ten additional studies that met the inclusion criteria were identified when reading the articles retrieved through the searches and nine additional intervention studies which met our PICOS inclusion criteria were discovered in the reference lists of two previous reviews (Hall et al., 2019; Ludwig et al., 2019).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

As a tool for the selection of the articles in the review, the PICOS (Population, Intervention, Control, Outcome, and Study Design) was used (see Table 1). The selected population (Criteria P) was students up to 18 years old, and students with any L1 and L2 languages were included. Studies with Spanish L1 and English L2 were identified but not included in the final selection unless they explicitly addressed the question of cross-language effects. There was no explicit focus on ‘at risk’ students or students not making the expected progress in reading, although, since there was a focus on intervention studies, it can be expected that many of the participants had been included in the interventions because they were not making the expected progress. In terms of the nature of the intervention (Criteria I) the focus of the review was on studies targeting word decoding or reading comprehension, or both, in a second language. In terms of comparisons and study designs (Criteria C & S) RCT studies, quasi-experimental studies, with or without control or comparison groups, and single-subject studies were included. Study designs excluded were longitudinal, prediction studies or cross-sectional studies, and follow-up studies. Outcomes (Criteria O) related to any aspect of reading were considered. We kept the criteria for reading as broad as possible at this stage due to the complexity of reading outcomes in the studies and then filtered the studies by hand. We excluded studies that did not have an outcome related to reading for example handwriting, pronunciation, or attention. The context was limited to school contexts, other contexts were excluded (e.g., training at home with parents).

Our review only looked at studies where the student’s home language was different from the school language, and where the school language was the main or one of the languages in the country where the school was situated. This was summarized as “learning to read in L2 in an L2 context,” but it must be acknowledged that in many countries the context is multilingual and that many learners use more than one language at home. Studies of those learning a “foreign language” as a school subject were not included in this review.

Following abstract screening, 429 articles appeared to meet the PICOS criteria (see Table 1), and after full text reading a final set of 22 articles was judged to meet the criteria for inclusion. The main reasons for exclusion at this

final stage included: (a) the wrong population or context (e.g., intervention studies with those learning a second language as a foreign language); (b) the wrong outcome (e.g., measures of oral language not reading); (c) limited time or scope of the intervention (e.g., training over just one week, or just use of text-enhancement or support).

Methods of Analysis

The selected intervention studies were examined using a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final selection of studies was reviewed a second time and the data was extracted and coded under 18 headlines: Author, Year, Title, Aim, Theory, Hypothesis, Type of study, Group conditions, Participants, Comparison/control group, Age, Country, L1 and L2. The initial coding of data was done by the first author of this article, and the second author checked the data during the analysis and writing process. The methods for assessing outcomes and the terms for defining the types of interventions were developed as part of the analysis process.

Results

An overview of the 22 articles is presented in Table 2, which lists the authors, participants' age, the country, first and second languages, main findings, and an indication of the themes under which the studies are presented in the following sections of this review.

Themes

Presentation of the results from the current study was grouped around three main themes, based on the needs and research gaps identified from previous reviews.

1. Participants learning a second language other than English.
2. Participants learning English with a first language other than Spanish.
3. Interventions which address the issue of transfer of gains made in one language to improve outcomes in another.

The main themes are indicated in a column of Table 2.

Overview of Identified Studies

Twelve different countries were represented and most studies (17) involved students in kindergarten to third grade. Relatively few interventions (5) focused on older students (grade 6 and above) and those studies often involved learners who had been identified as dyslexic or as experiencing severe difficulties in learning to read. A finding to note already is the relative scarcity of intervention studies with older second language students.

Ten studies involved participants learning to read in a second language other than English. We identified 20 studies where participants were learning English as L2 but did not have Spanish as their first language. Nine studies explicitly addressed the question of transfer.

Theme 1—Participants Learning a Second Language Other than English

Five of the studies in this section involved students learning to read in German as a second language, Norwegian was the second language in one study, and French in another. In three further studies, participants were learning to read English as L2 in addition to another language: one study had German and English as L2, one study had French and English as L2, and one study had Kiswahili and English as L2. This finding answers our research question which asks whether there is a body of evidence concerning reading interventions for learning languages other than English. The answer is that, according to our research, a very limited amount of evidence can be found. The main features of the interventions and the main findings from those studies that were identified are presented in Table 2.

In most of the studies with students learning German as L2, the students had a variety of first languages. Bar-Kochva and Hasselhorn (2017) studied students in 5th and 6th grade who were newly arrived in Germany from 12 different countries; Seifert, Schwab, and Gasteiger-Klicpera (2014) studied a similarly mixed, but younger group of students amongst whom there were 25 different first languages. In the study by Schwab, Seifert, and Gasteiger-Klicpera (2014) 18 different languages were spoken amongst the second language students. Sperling, Barwasser, and Grünke (2019) used a multiple baseline methodology to study the progress of three students learning German who had Romanian (2) or Persian (1) as their L1s. In the single study where Norwegian was the second language (Bratlie, Gustafsson, & Torkildsen, 2021), many different home languages were recorded, although 69% of these L2 students were noted to use Norwegian regularly at home, and 72% of parents reported that their child was equally or more proficient in Norwegian compared to their minority language. Pfenninger (2015) studied students whose first language was Swiss German, who were learning German as L2 and English as L3. A final study in this

section looked at the effects of an interactive reading intervention in kindergarten classes in French-speaking Belgium for language minority students (Thomas, Colin, & Leybaert, 2020).

Table 2 presents the main findings from studies within this first theme: students learning to read in a second language other than English. There are broadly positive results from the interventions which ranged from app-based learning, and interactive reading, to multi-component language and reading interventions. Only the Seifert et al. (2014) study failed to show intervention effects at the word level in comprehension and in nonword reading. Where comparisons were made (Schwab et al., 2014; Bratlie et al., 2021), differences between those learning in a second or first language were not seen.

Theme 2—Participants Learning English with a First Language Other than Spanish

Turning to our second research question, we identified 20 studies where participants were learning English as L2 but did not have Spanish as their first language. As was the case in theme 1, the majority of these studies (13) involved students with a range of first languages including four studies where there were over 20 different first languages. There were two studies where the first language was Kiswahili, and one study for: Chinese, Arabic, Malay, Vietnamese, Korean, Hindi, and Zulu. Given this wide variation, it is not possible to attempt a synthesis or further analysis, but we shall highlight some key findings. The main features of the studies and their findings are shown in Table 2.

Lipka and Siegel (2010) examined the development of literacy skills, using a Response to Intervention (RTI) model with 530 L1 and 92 L2 English language students in which over 33 different first languages were represented (Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Farsi, and Spanish the most frequent). An interesting finding in this study was that dual language students had some advantages which mitigated risks of reading difficulties in the longer term, highlighting the important point that dual language status itself should not be seen as a risk factor. Lovett et al. (2008) looked at struggling readers who were either learning English as their first language or their second language (there were nine different first languages). The intervention group outperformed the control group in reading outcomes, and in the rate of growth, and, as in Lipka and Siegel's (2020) study, no differences in response were found between the L1 and L2 groups. Interestingly, oral language predicted the outcomes as well as the rate of reading growth during the intervention, with greater growth being made by those with greater language impairment. In contrast, in Vadasy and Sanders' (2011) study better response to intervention was associated with better initial levels of vocabulary and word reading in the L2 group. Likewise in the study by Vadasy,

Sanders, and Nelson (2015) better progress was made by those students with better vocabulary at the outset.

Dussling (2018) reported findings from a preliminary single-subject design study using a systematic phonological awareness and phonics-based instruction with five participants who had different first languages. All students showed improvements over the 32 intervention sessions in word reading and phoneme segmentation. It was concluded that the key components of reading recommended by the National Literacy Panel (2006) can be effective with non-Spanish speaking English language learners. Jamaludin, Alias, Mohd Khir, DeWitt, and Kenayathula (2016) conducted an intervention with students with Malay as their first language who were learning English in a bilingual (English/Malay) school context, and a second study with Malay-English bilingual readers was reported by Zhang (2016). Significant effects of the interventions were seen in both cases.

In summary, the studies in this group provide positive evidence that the same kinds of interventions that have been shown to be effective for English Language students with Spanish as a first language are also effective for those with other first languages. Where comparisons were made between L2 and L1 students receiving the same interventions, generally similar results were found. An exception to this was the Vadasy and Sanders (2011) study where L1 students tended to make greater gains, although the L2 students showed more progress in phonological awareness but less progress in passage reading fluency compared to the L1 students.

Theme 3—Interventions which Address the Issue of Transfer of Gains Made in One Language to Improved Outcomes in Another

We turn next to studies that focus on the effects of training in one language on outcomes in another. In total, nine of the studies identified in our search have addressed this question.

Kim and Piper (2019) report on a randomized controlled study of students in Grades 1–2 in Kenya spoke a range of different first languages. In Kenya, children are expected to learn the two official languages, Kiswahili and English, as well as their first language, of which there are many. In addition to showing the positive effects of the intervention, the study found that students who had received explicit reading instruction in Kiswahili showed transfer to outcome measures in English. Wawire and Kim (2018) also found evidence of transfer in a randomized control study involving 322 first-grade multilingual students in Kenya, although their results were less consistent. Piper, Bulat, and Johnston (2015) reported transfer effects from an intervention in English to outcomes in Kiswahili. Finally, in this section, Pfenninger (2015) found significant gains in both L2 German and L3 English from

an intervention delivered in English, showing that training in one language (L3 in this case) can have benefits for another language (here L2).

Turning back to L1 Spanish speakers learning L2 English, it is interesting to look at the study by Vaughn et al. (2006) where students took part in an intervention in either English or Spanish, and outcomes were measured in both languages (see Table 2). Transfer effects were seen for students in the Spanish intervention group who outperformed students in the comparison group on English as well as Spanish outcome measures. This pattern was not, however, seen in the English study where the intervention and comparison groups differed on English but not Spanish outcome measures. A study by Gonzalez and Hughs (2021) used a phonics-based intervention delivered in Spanish and examined its effects on both Spanish and English outcomes. This was a small-scale study, but transfer effects were detected, with significant increases in both Spanish phonics (letter-sound decoding) and English phonics. Gains in comprehension were not significant, though there was improvement, especially on the Spanish measures.

Abu-Rabia, Shakkour and Siegel (2013) discussed a different kind of transfer which they termed Cognitive Retroactive Transfer in which gains from instruction in L2 translate back to gains in L1. Their paper includes multiple comparisons with no significance level correction and no direct testing of differential gains. Nevertheless, the main finding, based on an overall score for English language skills, shows a clear advantage for the intervention group (as expected) but also a significant gain on an overall measure of Arabic language skills, whereas no such gain (in Arabic) is seen in the comparison group. A later study by Feder and Abu-Raiba (2020) extended the Abu-Raiba et al. (2013) study, using a similar intervention program for L1 Hebrew students learning L2 English. Significant gains were made by the intervention group in both English and Hebrew language skills, despite the intervention being only in English.

Chung et al. (2021) examined the impact of a reading program in Chinese and English in Hong Kong with 99 Chinese L1 kindergarten students (third year) learning English as L2. The intervention group outperformed the comparison group on measures of Chinese phonological awareness and morphological awareness, and also on measures of English phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, and English word reading. This is a similar finding to that obtained by Zhang (2016) where despite the intervention being in English, there were also significant treatment effects on two of the three measures of morphological awareness in Malay and on word reading in Malay.

In summary, the studies identified under this theme show that training in one language can influence development in another, although outcomes are mixed. Effects were seen particularly on outcomes measuring phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge. There is evidence to suggest that

transfer may occur more easily from a language with a more transparent orthography to a language with a less transparent orthography (Vaughn et al., 2006).

Discussion

The objective of this review was to identify reading intervention studies of L2 students, from kindergarten to the end of compulsory school, and to describe and summarize their findings. We had a particular interest in identifying studies that concerned interventions in a second language other than Spanish as L1 and English as L2, studies that looked at possible influences of different first languages, and studies which addressed the issue of transfer of gains made in one language to outcomes in another.

Interventions in Other Languages than Spanish as L1 and English as L2

The present review showed that there is an emerging body of evidence from studies of learning German as an L2 but, as yet, no conclusions can be drawn about differences compared to English. The results from these studies are not entirely consistent, with some evidence for the benefits of morphological awareness training and weak evidence about training in comprehension. We also found an emerging body of evidence about interventions for those learning English who had a range of first languages, it was not possible to group these studies in any way; the largest number of studies included L2 student groups in which very many first languages were represented. We found very limited evidence about students with Chinese L1 learning English in an English language environment although we excluded many studies of Chinese students (also of Arabic students) who were learning English as a foreign language, for example, as a school subject. There is scope for a further review of these studies which may provide indications of specific factors that are relevant for non-alphabetic languages for example.

Intervention in one Language and Outcomes in Another

In accordance with the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979; 2021), our review strengthens the conclusion that training in reading skills in one language, whether it is L1 or L2, can be transferred to other languages, although the evidence here is not strong. It appears that gains in phonological

awareness and letter-sound knowledge were more readily transferred from one language to another and that training in a language with a more transparent orthography (e.g., Spanish) may transfer more readily to a language with less transparent orthography (English) than vice-versa (Vaughn et al., 2006). Evidence for transfer effects from training in reading comprehension is more uncertain. The mixed results regarding the transfer of reading comprehension could be explained by the Common Underlying Proficiency theory (Cummins, 1981; 2021) and the notion that transfer occurs most readily when exposure to a second language is sufficient. It could also be the case that comprehension is more language-specific and therefore less subject to transfer, as suggested by Goodrich and Lonnigan (2018). Furthermore, it seems to be the case that comprehension may be generally more difficult to improve through interventions. In a previous comprehensive review, Hall et al. (2019) concluded that there was evidence for clear benefits from interventions with phonological awareness, phonics instruction, and word decoding instruction, but evidence for the effectiveness of interventions targeting reading comprehension and vocabulary was more limited. The studies in the present review are in line with these conclusions, even though different combinations of first and second languages were involved. In the present review, we have found more evidence of effective interventions that target vocabulary and, especially, morphology. One likely reason for this is that morphological awareness is more important in languages such as German, Malay, and Norwegian when compared to English, and therefore, reading interventions for both first and second language students are more likely to include a focus on this.

Details about Language Levels for L2 Students and Intervention Matched to Individual Needs

Previous reviews have called for studies to provide more details about the language levels of participants and to describe how interventions target the individual needs of participants (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). Rivera et al. (2009) and Hall et al. (2019) also emphasized the importance of assessment and monitoring, for example, through Response to Intervention (RTI). In the present review, we see more evidence of studies taking a more individualized approach through, for example, the RTI Model, and an encouraging finding is that early intervention reduces the likelihood of longer-term reading problems for both first and second language students.

Design of Future Intervention Studies and the Importance of Defining Selection Criteria

In previous reviews of L1 Spanish students learning to read L2 English, differences in average effect sizes have been reported. Ludwig et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis showed large effect sizes for reading accuracy and reading fluency, and moderate effect sizes for reading comprehension, and, in general, stronger intervention effects were obtained compared to those reported by Richards-Tutor et al. (2016). Ludwig et al. hypothesized that differences might relate to different study-selection criteria and to differing definitions of risk/difficulty status. Roberts et al. (2022) found generally lower effect sizes and commented that the nature of the comparison group (counterfactual) is one important factor with more rigorous studies involving random allocation and active controls generally showing smaller effect sizes than quasi-experimental studies and those with passive controls. Since our paper is a scoping review, we have not attempted to interpret effect sizes over different studies, but we note that, when reported, these were typically in line with those in studies of Spanish as L1 and English as L2.

Definition of L1 and L2

In a scoping review, it is important to limit the field, but at the same time not to exclude important sources of information. We had, initially, been more open to studies of second language learning in a first language context, but we took the decision to exclude those to keep the review manageable and because our initial interest in this area came from looking at the needs of newly arrived immigrants. However, it must be acknowledged that defining the language learning context is not straightforward. So, for example, we retained studies in Kenya where the official language, and often the school language, is English, whereas studies done in Hong Kong were excluded where, even though English is widely used, Chinese is the main language of communication for most students. Consequently, the definition of L1 and L2 can vary from time to time, depending on the criteria used (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981); for example, it could be that an L1 is the first learned language, the best mastered language, or the language that a student identifies with the most strongly. English could be seen as a second language, and not a foreign language, for students in many countries today because of widespread internet use.

Research Gaps and Need for Future Studies

In line with previous reviews, most of the studies we found involved students in kindergarten or primary school, with few studies looking at older students whether beginners or more advanced. Although it is important to give early support in reading to avoid later school failure (Fawcett & Lynch, 2000), there is also a need to understand what is effective for older students. This is particularly important when considering the needs of older L2 students who begin school when literacy teaching may no longer be part of the standard curriculum, as may be the case with many newly arrived immigrants or refugees. Although theoretical models of both reading instruction and second language learning emphasize the importance of developmental factors, there is still little research that looks at the effectiveness of different methods depending on the level of L1 reading skills when L2 reading instruction begins. However, it is interesting to note that in two studies identified in our review, better progress in reading was made by those with better initial levels of vocabulary knowledge (Vadasy & Sanders, 2011; Vadasy et al., 2015). An explanation could be that word decoding and vocabulary overlap, and vocabulary knowledge contributes to word recognition as well as language comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

A further research gap that we identify is that very few studies address the need to modify or create new elements of interventions to address specific factors associated with different first-second language pairings. Similarly, when looking at transfer effects from training, there are no studies that address language-specific factors and/or challenges of specific L1–L2 pairings. There is, however, some evidence that interventions for languages other than English place more emphasis on morphological awareness compared to the typical interventions for English language learners.

Most of the studies identified in this scoping review used experimental group designs, where the average performance of the participants is reported, and therefore there is a risk that individual differences will be masked. That said, differential effects were shown in the study by Vadasy and Sanders (2011) where better response to intervention in the L2 group was associated with better initial levels of vocabulary and word reading. These individual differences-by-treatment interactions, which are hard to detect, risk making a false conclusion that groups respond equally well. Given the number of factors that would need to be addressed, we argue that a single subject design could be of use to meet the challenge of comparing outcomes according to different student-, intervention-, and language-characteristics (cf., Cakiroglu, 2012). According to Horner et al. (2005), single-subject research is especially relevant for defining educational practices at the level of individual students.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

A clear implication from this review is that the field of intervention studies concerning learning to read in a second language remains a relatively under-researched area which is dominated by studies on learning to read in English. However, there is a growing evidence base that can be applied in practice and built upon through both experience and further research. In particular, there is good evidence from additional small-group or in-class programs. Delivered in kindergarten and first grade, targeting beginning reading skills such as phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and word decoding, can produce accelerated and sustained gains in comparison to “treatment as usual.”

The finding from the present study that reading skills (especially phonological awareness, and letter-sound knowledge) can transfer from one language to another has important implications for policy and practice in terms of the importance of maintaining and developing first language skills as well as second language skills. Evidence for the transfer of reading comprehension is less strong (cf. Bimmel, Van Den Bergh, & Oostdam, 2001; Cheung & Slavin, 2012), and, in general, effect sizes for interventions targeting reading comprehension are weaker compared to those targeting decoding skills (Ludwig et al, 2019). Nevertheless, an implication for practice, supported by this review, is that training in students’ first language reading skills can also be beneficial for their second language reading skills. Slavin and Cheung (2012) also argued for bilingual approaches and the opportunity for students to read in both L1 and L2 at different times each day, and Cummins (2021) has argued that instruction should be provided in both L1 and L2 when possible. The present review suggests that “foundation skills” training may be best done in L1, but more research is needed on the benefits of L1 versus L2 training of comprehension skills, and more evidence is needed on the role of specific reading training versus language training in general. We also note that practical recommendations may depend on the L1–L2 pairing since there appears to be greater evidence for transfer from transparent to opaque writing systems.

Limitations

One potential limitation of this scoping review is that only studies written in English were included. This selection criterion could have contributed to the limited number of studies identified which looked at reading interventions for learning languages other than English as L2. It is also a potential problem that studies relevant to our review may have been missed if titles, abstracts, or keywords did not match our search words. To mitigate this risk, we took a broad approach in our searches. A second major exclusion criterion in our review

was to exclude studies that focused on oral language development and did not assess reading outcomes. Many of these “vocabulary learning” interventions involved short-term training methods and supplemental materials, but others were more integrated into teaching practice. A consequence of this exclusion could be that evidence of studies that address skills relevant to comprehension is under-represented since they did not include direct tests of reading.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow diagram

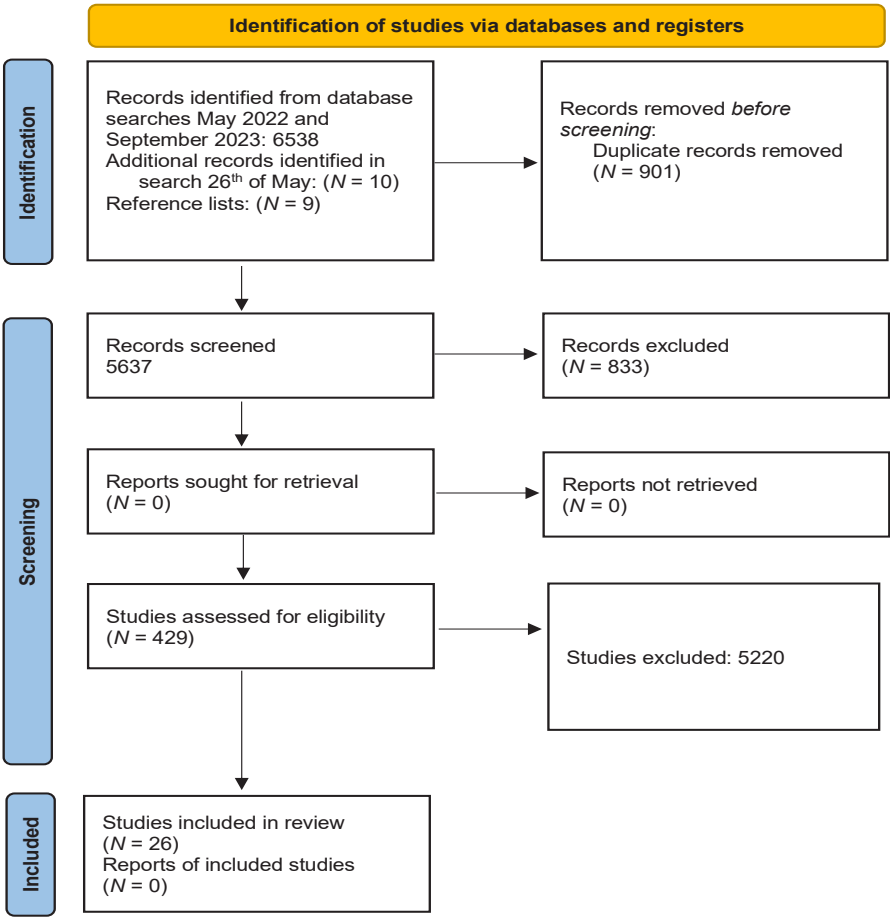


Table 1
Sampling According to PICOS Inclusive Criteria

Population (P)	Intervention (I)	Control (C)	Outcome (O)	Study design (S)
L2 students up to 18 years old. L1 other than Spanish and all L2 languages.	Word decoding, and reading comprehension in a second language	With or without control/comparison group	Reading in general	RCT, quasi-experimental studies, follow-up-studies, single-subject design studies

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Recreating Home Literacy in the Classroom: Emergent L2 Reading in Young Greek Learners of English

Abstract

Children begin school having already acquired a wide range of skills related to oral language, phonological awareness, print conventions, and letter knowledge. These emergent skills are closely associated with children's home literacy-related experiences and are strong precursors of L1 reading development. This experimental research examined whether this participation in literacy events can support second language acquisition to prepare young learners of English for L2 literacy and reading development. It involved two groups of nine seven-year-old learners each: a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was exposed to carefully selected English print storybooks, chosen for their potential to foster literacy skills, in a home-like environment without formal L2 instruction. The study's methodology compared the development of emergent skills and L2 reading ability across both groups. Despite varied reading outcomes, all participants in the experimental group developed significant emergent subskills, foundational to reading and beneficial for L2 development and cognitive growth. These results underline the importance of integrating rich English print materials into early L2 learning environments, offering practical insights for educators to enhance young learners' literacy and reading skills.

Keywords: emergent literacy skills, second language acquisition, young learners of English, Home Literacy Environment (HLE), informal literacy activities, shared reading

Today, there is a consensus that literacy development begins very early in a child's life, well before children start school and receive formal instruction (Adams, 1990; Sénéchal et al., 2001). Home is the first setting where children

have the opportunity to observe, explore, and participate in literacy events. These interactions are recognised as having a positive impact on children's development and partly account for the individual differences observed at school entry. Home literacy activities have been found to be significantly associated with improved school literacy performance (Alston-Abel & Berninger, 2018). Informal literacy activities, especially shared reading at home, seem to be more strongly connected with development of general oral language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition. This, in turn, indirectly supports the later development of reading comprehension skills (Hamilton et al., 2016).

There are considerable variations in the rate at which children acquire reading skills. Research consistently shows that active participation in literacy events, which usually take the form of reading stories, singing songs or even learning the alphabet, is strongly related to vocabulary growth and general language development in children (Chan & Sylva, 2015). In addition, reading books is considered the most critical activity for building the foundational knowledge necessary for future achievement in acquiring basic language skills and understanding metaphors (Caesar & Nelson, 2014). Specifically, Chan and Sylva indicate that the "key cognitive–linguistic strands that must be coordinated when learning to read are quite firmly in place before primary school" (p. 7). Therefore, the development of these skills is deemed critical. Children lacking these skills at school entry may need to exert greater effort to succeed in reading.

The home literacy environment (HLE) significantly influences the development of children's language skills. While the impact of HLE on the development of children's primary language is well-documented, its role in facilitating the acquisition of a second language in children remains less explored (Dong & Chow, 2022). In the context of second language learning, such holistic approaches to initiate literacy development at the first stages of introducing L2 to young learners (YLS) are not common. However, Yeung and King (2016) specifically address the home literacy environment and its effect on English language and literacy skills; their study evidenced that shared reading at home is a key practice that helps young Chinese ESL kindergarten children improve their English vocabulary, awareness of syllables, and ability to read words. Multiple aspects of HLE, such as shared book reading activities (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), parental direct instruction on print concepts (Burgess et al., 2002), and access to literacy resources (Johnson et al., 2008), have been shown to significantly enhance the development of oral language and literacy skills in young children.

In second language acquisition, a learner usually goes through a stage of formal instruction in a context-reduced setting when letter knowledge and word decoding are targeted. Traditional L2 literacy instruction divides the reading process into distinct components, such as: letter identification, letter-sound associations, and sight word recognition, allowing for systematic development of early literacy skills. The present study examines young learners' second

language development through their exposure to rich English print materials and participation in meaningful, literacy events in a context-embedded setting while focusing on the importance of foundational, emergent skills. No formal L2 instruction is involved, participants are exposed to a curated selection of enriched English-language storybooks. It implements and evaluates the application of this overlooked, yet critical, emergent stage to second language acquisition. Emergent literacy is considered to be an integral part of the process of becoming literate in L1 and is now being examined as an equally important component of L2 reading development.

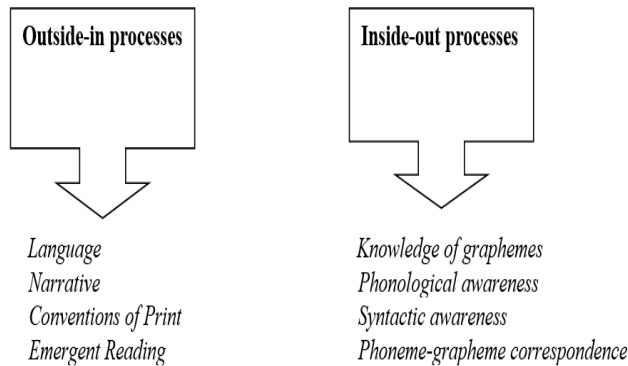
Theoretical Framework

The term emergent literacy (EL) was first conceived by Marie Clay (1967), who used it to describe the earliest behaviour and concepts young children employ in interacting with books even before the onset of formal teaching at schools. Clay perceived reading and writing as two cognitive processes that develop concurrently, with no need for reading to precede writing.

A central belief of EL theory is that the four language skills are all inter-related. Any progress that is recorded in one skill is bound to have a positive effect on the others (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The interactive nature of skills encourages a holistic view of language and the realisation of the fact that focusing on one discrete skill will also affect others. Another aspect of the theory is that it starts at birth and continues until the child starts formal schooling. On this basis, the family environment assumes a critical role in the development of these skills. Literacy-rich home environments are conducive to literacy growth. Even though various factors are at play for a child's literacy development, the family environment is related closely to early literacy skills development (Morrow, 2001). Burgess et al. (2002) suggest that the HLE has a potentially robust influence on oral language, phonological awareness, and word decoding ability, arguing that further attention should be paid to the manner it is conceptualised.

According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998), "the term 'emergent literacy' is used to denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualised as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child, rather than as an all-or-none phenomenon that begins when children start school" (p. 848). They propose that two sets of skills are used by children: *outside-in* processes which include knowledge about print, narratives, and language, and *inside-out* processes which include letter recognition, letter-sound association, and phonological awareness.

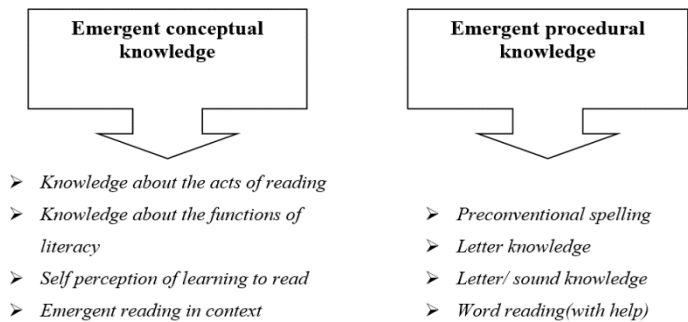
Figure 1
Emergent Literacy Components (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)



Outside-in processes are related to a child’s ability to recognise the context of what they are trying to read and act accordingly, focusing on comprehension skills. Inside-out processes include low-level decoding skills of literacy starting with the ability to identify letters and associate sounds with their corresponding graphemes.

Sénéchal et al. (2001) introduce a similar distinction naming knowledge about the acts of literacy and functions of print as emergent conceptual knowledge and knowledge about letters, sounds, and words as emergent procedural knowledge (code-related skills). They propose an advanced model of EL, claiming that in this new alternative model, EL is separate from oral language and metalinguistic skills, both of which constitute two distinct constructs. Although there are some differences between the two models, the primary distinction between the components is similar.

Figure 2
Emergent Literacy Components (Sénéchal et al., 2001)



Children require all these components of knowledge to become successful readers. Research in this field demonstrates the importance of oral language, phonological awareness, print knowledge, and letter awareness as strong precursors of reading development (Goswami, 2003; Lonigan et al., 2000; Williams, 2004; Wagner et al., 2006). The following sections summarise each component to provide a comprehensive view of key emergent literacy skills.

Oral Language

Oral language and literacy are both language-based skills. To put it simply, what is written and then read is oral language (Kamhi & Catts, 2002). Writing aspires to transcribe what is said orally, using various language systems, most of which rely on symbols developed to represent sounds in words. Well-developed oral language skills are a prerequisite for successful reading development. A poor vocabulary will affect young learners' ability to recognise words and comprehend what they read. Foorman et al. (2002) stressed the importance of oral language by placing it as a foundation for EL. They argue that "young children's vocabulary has an impact on decoding skills very early in the process of learning to read, but the explanatory mechanisms behind this relation have yet to be identified" (p. 175). They assume that oral language growth is laterally related to the enhancement of phonological sensitivity, another EL component.

Similarly, Rohde (2015) considers oral language crucial for EL development. Children with developed oral language have an advantage in acquiring literacy skills. She suggests that oral speech development should be targeted both implicitly and explicitly before formal schooling to ensure all children have equal opportunities for literacy success. The family environment can offer invaluable opportunities for children to develop enriched oral language, starting from infancy through infant-directed speech that promotes speech sound discrimination and word and clause recognition. When story readings begin, book-related discourse between adults and children, whether contextualised or decontextualised, is strongly associated with advanced vocabulary knowledge (Hindman et al., 2008).

Phonological Awareness

"Phonological awareness is a child's ability to detect and manipulate the sounds of spoken language independent of the semantic properties of those sounds" (Goodrich et al., 2013, p. 414). Rhyme, syllable awareness, and phonemic awareness constitute phonological awareness (PA). This ability is acquired in stages, some of which may overlap. Therefore, children first start

by distinguishing similar and dissimilar words. After that, they move on to blending sounds and then to removing sounds from words. The ability to replace sounds with words comes last. Therefore, children begin with the larger units, those of words, and then they become sensitive to syllables and, finally, to phonemes. Awareness of phonemes is manifested approximately at the age of five. It is worth noticing that children develop sensitivity to syllables earlier than to onsets and rhymes (Foorman et al., 2002). However, these stages are not linear; they often overlap. Their sequence can also be altered by experiences or explicit instruction as in the case of phonemic awareness instruction.

PA has received considerable attention from researchers as it is considered to be a strong predictor of reading success (Adams, 1990). It is the first time that children move their attention from meaning to the sounds of words. This may not be easy for all learners as meaning makes sense to them and offers a purpose. They use words to communicate, unlike individual sounds that serve no apparent function. Focusing attention on the sounds of language is quite a different ability that is not happening automatically. Most children will not direct their attention to the sounds of words; meaning comes first (Rohde, 2015). They need to perceive the difference in the sounds words carry, which is a more cognitively demanding task. Book features and adult code-related talk can shift children's attention to the sounds of phonemes and help them develop this sensitivity.

Print Awareness

Print awareness plays a significant role in developing literacy skills in young learners. Through print referencing during read-aloud activities children can enhance their foundational and emergent literacy skills at a faster rate (Justice & Ezell, 2004). An understanding of the relationship between speech sounds and printed symbols is critical for reading acquisition in the early stages of reading development (Lentsch, 2018). Generally speaking, print awareness refers to children's understanding of the conventions, forms, and functions of print (van Kleeck, 2006). More specifically, children gradually gain knowledge that print has a particular purpose: to convey meaning. Letters and words carry meaning and offer a new way of communication, independent of the immediate context. Specifically, children begin to realise that certain conventions apply to all forms of print. In most alphabetic languages, letters are written from left to right and top to bottom. Reading a book requires turning over to the next page. A sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a period.

The forms of print are another component of equal importance that children need to acquire. Distinguishing letters from words, differentiating lowercase from uppercase letters, and realising that words are basic units of print are

concepts that need to be mastered. Print functions range from specific tasks like reading street signs to general applications such as following instructions (Gunn et al., 2000). While print awareness varies among children, there is consensus that children exposed to numerous literacy events develop this knowledge earlier and more extensively than those lacking such experience. Interventions that encourage parents and educators to engage in reading activities using environmental print and print-referencing approaches aim to enhance young learners' attention to printed text, supporting their literacy development (Piasta et al., 2012; Roy-Charland et al., 2015). Gettinger and Stoiber (2014) found that changes in educators' print-referencing techniques during whole-class book reading improved children's print-knowledge abilities. Liu et al. (2020) identified associations between print fixations—where children focus on written text while reading with adults—and print-related abilities, including orthographic awareness. Neumann et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between children's attention to environmental print and reading ability (RA). The researchers divided 36 children aged 3 to 5 into two groups (beginning readers and pre-readers) based on assessments of their alphabet knowledge and word-reading skills. Beginning readers showed faster attention to environmental print than pre-readers, suggesting that reading ability may influence children's attention to print.

Letter Recognition and Letter/Sound Association

Developing awareness of letters and their corresponding sounds is essential for learning to read (Plewko et al., 2018). Like phonological awareness, this skill can develop formally or informally in young children. Knowledge of letter names is beneficial because these names provide information about grapheme sounds. Foorman et al. (2002) argue that learning letter names can be easier than learning letter sounds, possibly because letter names are unique. The authors further suggest that these processes are “reciprocally related” (p. 176) such that neither necessarily develops before the other. Typically, children learn letters before acquiring more complex phonological skills. To become successful readers, learners must acquire both letter knowledge and letter-sound correspondences.

Languages vary significantly as to how transparent they are to letter-sound relationships. The speed at which children learn letter-sound (LS) associations is influenced by the nature of the script, particularly its orthographic transparency, meaning how regular the letter-sound mappings are (Seymour et al., 2003). Children typically achieve proficiency in LS associations within one year of starting reading lessons in languages with transparent orthographies, facilitating a seamless transition to reading (Blomert & Vaessen, 2009). The Greek language (EL) has transparent orthography, while English has a more opaque

orthographic system. This difference raises important questions regarding how easily a reader whose L1 has a transparent orthography can develop an emergent reading skills in an L2 which is much less transparent. Specifically, for Greek learners of English as an L2, the adoption of strategies to navigate and decipher the less predictable rules of English is necessary. To become a successful reader in an emergent context with no overt instruction, the learner will have to transfer some of their knowledge regarding decoding and letter identification. Language transfer involves the tendency to transfer phonological, structural, and semantic features from the native language when learning a second language.

Language Transfer in Emergent Literacy

In the present study, the primary focus is on Greek learners' ability to transfer basic emergent reading skills from Greek to English. Therefore, particular attention is given to encoding/decoding skills, as well as to some functional literacy abilities that readers acquire. According to Roberts (1994), these low-level skills are transferable and studies conducted in bilingual education programmes concluded that even in immersion contexts, learners fare better when they are literate in their first language rather than when they receive instruction only in L2. As it seems, learners already literate in their first language seem to have a benefit in learning to read in L2.

To account for the transfer of early literacy skills, Cummins (1979) introduced the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (DIH). Conceptual knowledge about the functions of literacy and procedural knowledge which includes letter recognition and letter/sound associations can be transferred as long as there is adequate exposure to an L2, motivation to learn, and developed competence in these skills in the L1. More specifically, Cummins suggests that "the development of competence in a second language L2 is partially a function of the type of competence already developed in the L1 at the time when intensive exposure to an L2 begins" (Cummins, 1979, p. 28). Therefore, when a child's L1 procedural and conceptual knowledge is adequately developed, this will mediate L2 development. Accordingly, children with low L1 language skills at the time of exposure to L2 will experience difficulty with L2 development.

Adding to this, primary-aged young learners in Greece are concurrently expanding their vocabularies in both their first language and a foreign language. The extent of a learner's L1 vocabulary is believed to influence the pace and eventual size of their L2 vocabulary (Masrai & Milton, 2015). Research by Biemiller and Slonim (2001) suggests that there is significant variability in the size of L1 vocabularies among young learners, and this variation is associated with later educational achievements. This further illustrates the importance of

a robust L1 foundation for successful L2 acquisition, aligning with the principles outlined by Cummins (1979).

Adding to the aforementioned, cognitive theories on reading and comprehension underscore the critical importance of inference-making in reading. Such cognitive models recognise the essential role of inferences in connecting segments of text to create coherence, highlighting a complex cognitive skill that transcends basic decoding abilities (van den Broek et al., 2015; Savić, 2018). This insight aligns seamlessly with the process of language transfer, showcasing the complex cognitive engagement that extends beyond simple word recognition. Research into the reading skills of young learners has delved into the processes they engage in while reading and understanding texts, revealing that initially, children focus predominantly on decoding and recognising words. This stage of learning restricts their comprehension mostly to the literal meanings within the text (textbase), while their capacity to draw inferences typically requires external prompting (Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005). The variation in children's ability to infer is influenced by factors such as working memory and prior knowledge, crucial for shaping their overall cognitive and reading comprehension skills (van den Broek et al., 2015). Studies have shown that as children age, they enhance these skills and become adept at concentrating on pertinent information and effectively accessing their background knowledge, thereby making sophisticated inferences even at an early age (van den Broek et al., 2015, p. 109).

Cummins (1979) also proposed the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model whereby skills, knowledge, and concepts learned in any language can be transferred across languages. He maintains that this CUP forms the base upon which L1, L2, or every other language is developed. This development is reciprocal. "As children develop high levels of L2 skills, their fluent access to two languages can give rise to enhancement both of L1 skills and other aspects of cognitive functioning" (Cummins, 1979, p. 34). Knowledge gained does not need to be relearned. According to Cummins, two forms of skills are identified: language-independent skills which rely on the quality and quantity of input and on individual attributes, and language-specific skills which rely mainly on the input given. Thereupon, in the case of phonological awareness, the overlap of sounds across languages accounts for the conditions that mediate transfer and acquisition. If L1 and L2 overlap phonologically then PA is primarily regarded as a specific language-independent skill and is transferred to L2 conditioned by the personal attributes of the learner and the quality and quantity of input. When this is not the case and they do not overlap, they are viewed as specific language skills, the development of which is contingent on the quality and quantity of input (Goodrich et al., 2013).

One point of convergence arises from the above theories: learners need strong motivation along with quality and quantity of input, which can be found in

storybooks as they provide a naturalistic and engaging exposure to high-quality text and reading. Participation in such literacy events constitutes the cornerstone of emergent literacy development as it effectively touches upon all its constituents (Chan & Sylva, 2015; Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Neumann et al., 2015).

Concisely, shared storybook reading promotes letter knowledge as learners process the visual information deriving from the graphemes; it improves phonological awareness as learners distinguish and explore the sounds of the words they hear; it develops letter/sound association as they process the phoneme/grapheme correlations they see, and it cultivates oral language skills in their effort to comprehend the meaning of the story and interact with the characters. Therefore, storybook reading challenges all those skills necessary for emergent language development in L1 and it remains to be seen if the same can be successfully applied in the very early stages of L2.

Significance of the Study

In summary, the present study attempted to examine the potential of young Greek learners to develop emergent literacy skills in English from their own experiences with texts prior to formal instruction. It is an experimental study, where the researcher-teacher observed behaviours and learning processes of the Young Learners of English (YLE), participating in the research, without manipulating or controlling any variables. The study investigated the development of the ability to connect meaning with words and sounds with letters through shared book experiences and interaction with them in the pre-stages of second language acquisition, where YLE are exposed to home-like literacy environment experiences in L2 via printed material and without having previously received any formal instruction in L2. The theoretical framework relates to emergent literacy, namely, the literacy behaviours that children seem to develop prior to receiving any formal instruction mainly through exposure to text and to reading (Hall, 1987).

Since, in the particular study, participants are already literate in their native language, basic emergent L1 literacy skills have already been developed. Specifically, emergent conceptual knowledge is full-fledged, while procedural knowledge, which involves encoding/decoding skills and functional abilities in L1, is also developed and generally transferable (Roberts, 1994). Therefore, the two research questions investigated in this study were: (a) Do young Greek learners build up literacy skills and develop as emergent readers in English through informal exposure to text and reading? (b) To what extent does L1 linguistic competence affect L2 conceptual and procedural development? To address the first research question, learners were examined on letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and word decoding measures in the target language prior to the intervention and, again, at its conclusion. The second research question was

similarly investigated evaluating the same measures in the native language via a Greek standardised test conducted midway through the intervention. It was hypothesised that a statistically significant number of learners would develop L2 reading-related abilities and that L1 linguistic competence would highly affect L2 reading development.

Method

This experimental research examined whether participation in literacy events can be applied to second language acquisition to prepare young learners of English for L2 literacy and reading development. It involved two groups of nine seven-year-old learners each: a control group and an experimental group. Following informed consent from the parents/guardians, two standardised tests were administered to assess the learners' language abilities. The emergent literacy components regarding L2 were the dependent variables that were investigated using an English standardised test battery (DIBELS). L1 linguistic competence was the independent variable that may influence the progress of the dependent variables, therefore, it was also examined to address the second research question by the use of another Greek standardised test (Porpodas).

Independent t-tests were used to compare differences between the experimental and control groups, whereas paired t-tests were used to analyse pre-post changes within each group, and, finally, Pearson correlations coefficients were calculated to examine relationships between L1 and L2 measures. Given the presence of latent variables related to gender, socioeconomic background, educational status, and cognitive and psychological factors, the study did not seek to establish a causal relationship between L1 and L2 conceptual and procedural development, but rather to examine the correlation between these variables.

Participants

The research was conducted in two Greek primary schools. The first school was located on the outskirts of a small town in the prefecture of Imathia, while the second one was situated in the town centre. The experimental group, based at the school on the outskirts, consisted of nine second-grade students, most of whom came from a rural area and were of low economic, social, and educational status. There were no private language schools there, so the participants were formally exposed to the English language only at school, a factor that minimised the influence of external variables. Despite being a convenience sample,

participants possessed key characteristics that made them ideal for this research. The initial pool of potential participants for the control group, based in the town centre, consisted of seventeen second-grade students. Their educational, social, and economic background was slightly more advanced compared to the experimental group. Because of practical constraints, random assignment of participants was not possible. To ensure comparable conditions between groups, a matching procedure was implemented: students from the control group who attended private language schools were excluded from the study, as this additional English exposure would create an uncontrolled variable. This screening process eliminated eight students who were attending private language schools, resulting in a final control group of nine students ($N = 9$). These nine students, like those in the experimental group, had not received any formal English language instruction outside of regular school hours.

Materials

A total of ten books were selected and used in the study. All were authentic readers, written specifically for pre-school, native-English speakers. Other forms of authentic material would prove linguistically too demanding for the learners, as they had little or no knowledge of the target language. The following features were taken into consideration:

Predictability through repeated patterns: learners can accurately predict what comes next and produce some narrative on their own.

Lift-the-flap or touch-and-feel books: learners are encouraged to actively engage in the story involving all their senses.

A motivating, meaningful context: learners are by nature drawn to them and develop linguistically, emotionally, and culturally. (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002)

The following books were used:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar (1994) by Eric Carle

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (1996) by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle

Dear Zoo (1986) and *My Presents* (1988) by Rod Campbell

Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes (2010) and *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* (2012) by Eric Litwin

Where's Spot? (2013) and *Where Are the Yellow Chicks, Spot?* (2019) by Eric Hill

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen (2019)

That's Not My Dinosaur by Fiona Watt (2020)

Data Collection Instruments

Two standardised battery tests were used to measure the participants' progress in both groups. The first one, DIBELS 8th (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) examines letter identification, phonological awareness, and early literacy skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2018). This test was administered before and after the intervention to investigate L2 development. The second test, a Tool for Detecting and Investigating Reading Difficulties in Kindergarten and in 1st and 2nd Grade of Primary School (Porpodas, 2007a) examines nonsense word fluency, phoneme segmentation, and reading comprehension, and was administered once halfway through the course of the intervention to evaluate students' existing reading skills in their native language. Specifically, DIBELS measured the following four areas:

- *Alphabetic Knowledge*: The Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) subtest included in the DIBELS assessment was used for measuring L2 alphabetic knowledge. The subjects were asked to identify as many letters of the English alphabet as they could. Either the name or the sound of the letter was considered to be correct. The raw score was the total number of letters that were identified correctly in one minute. The LNF version for kindergarten examines forty uppercase and lowercase letters starting with those that are used more frequently.
- *Phonological Awareness*: The Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtest investigates the subjects' ability to listen to words orally produced by the examiner and segment these words into their phonemes. For example, they hear the word 'am' and they produce /a/ /m/. The students received one point for each correct phoneme. In English r-controlled vowels and diphthongs are single phoneme sounds (Biancarosa et al., 2019). The English and Greek phonological systems treat vowels and diphthongs differently. In English, words like 'ear' (/E/ /ar/) and 'say' (/s/ /A/) are analysed as having two phonemes. However, their Greek equivalents are analysed as three-phoneme words. During assessment, this cross-linguistic difference was accommodated: students who segmented English vowels and diphthongs according to Greek phonological patterns were not penalised, as long as their segmentation was accurate. /A/ can be further segmented into /e/ /E/, a practice more familiar to Greek students. Consequently, the word 'take' can be analysed as /t/ /e/ /E/ /k/ and considered acceptable. Each correct phoneme accounted for one point.
- *Letter/sound association and word reading*: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Word Reading Fluency (WRF) were used to measure learners' emergent literacy development. NWF consists of pseudowords whose structures are most commonly seen in English. They follow the Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) pattern and they resemble letter combinations that are used in English, however, they are nonsensical words designed to minimise

the influence of vocabulary familiarity (Biancarosa et al., 2019). At this part of the examination, students received one point for every correct sound in the word and one point for reading out the whole word. For example, if the student saw 'pon' and read /p/ /o/ /n/ they received three points for Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) and one point for the Words Read Correctly (WRC). On the contrary, on the Word Reading Fluency (WRF) subtest, each word received one point and was considered correct only when it was pronounced as a whole even if the student had first uttered the phonemes one by one. *The Tool for Investigating Reading Difficulties* was also administered to both groups and its main objective was to explore the second issue concerning the effect of L1 linguistic competence on the L2 conceptual and procedural development. It was administered and assessed following the prescribed test procedures (Porpodas, 2007b). Each correct answer was awarded one point culminating at 24 for NWR (Nonsense Word Reading) and PSF (Phonemic Segmentation Fluency) and 16 for the Reading Comprehension Test (RCT). Afterwards, there was a conversion of the raw scores to their standard scores mainly because the raw scores did not have an absolute zero and a standard measurement unit to enable comparisons. For this reason, it was necessary to convert raw scores to a secondary rating scale with a grading range from 1 to 19, mean value (M) of 10, and a standard deviation (SD) of 3.

Procedure

Initially, participants in both the experimental and control groups were pre-tested to assess L2 alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and word reading. Afterwards, the participants in the experimental group were exposed to storybook readings and print-rich activities in general, whereas the children in the control group adhered to their standard English syllabus which involved the use of flashcards, songs, alphabet games, and action-oriented activities (Research Centre for Language Teaching and Testing, University of Athens, n.d.). The participants in both groups were exposed to English for 45 minutes, twice a week for six months. All the lessons were conducted by the same teacher and researcher of this study. Midway through the intervention, a Greek assessment test was administered to both groups to investigate the effect of L1 linguistic competence on L2 development. At the end of the study, both groups were assessed on L2 progress. All the standardised tests were conducted with the assistance of another colleague to ensure validity and reliability.

Four stages were devised for implementation within the intervention framework following Krashen's (2004) principles on free voluntary reading and compelling comprehensible input. These stages include read-aloud stories, shared

reading, and self-selected recreational reading, all focused on the reader’s interest. In the first stage, stories were read by the teacher. Facial expressions, gestures, and intonation were used extensively to stimulate learners’ motivation. There was no vocabulary presentation before the storybook readings. If a comprehension problem arose, there was a translation into their native language. There was a gradual switch from the use of L1 to the use of L2. Follow-up activities such as drawing or singing complemented the first reading. The second stage involved re-reading of the stories and encouragement of the students to read along. Attention was focused on print without formal instruction and code-related talk was introduced implicitly. During the initial reading of the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* particular focus was placed on the distinct sounds of various consonants and vowels in the target language. For example, attention was drawn to the sounds of /b/ and /t/ in bear, /d/ in red, /f/ in frog, and /h/ in horse. Repetitive structures, such as green, sheep, see, or what, white, where, were grouped together and emphasised engagingly and playfully to enhance language acquisition. However, it is important to stress that the instructor’s main objective was the plot of the story and the pleasure children derived from it. During the third stage, books were taken home and the caregivers were advised to read them with their children at bedtime. In the fourth stage, learners were asked to read a page of their favourite book or the whole story to their classmates.

Table 1
Stages of the Intervention

1st stage	Story-reading by the teacher in class Use of facial expressions, gestures and switch from L1 to L2
2nd stage	Re-reading of the stories by the teacher with learners' participation Use of code-related talk and implicit print referencing techniques
3rd stage	Borrowing of the books selected by the children Story-reading by the parents to the children
4th stage	Story-reading by the learners in class

Results

The DIBELS test was administered to two groups of nine YLs each (experimental and control) to assess their L2 language abilities before and after six months of exposure. Raw scores were compared to designated benchmarks, with means and standard deviations calculated for each measure. Table 2 presents the initial profile for both groups.

Descriptive statistics from the DIBELS pre-test at the beginning of the intervention indicate that YLs in both the experimental and control groups scored below the benchmark on the LNF subtest, as expected, since none of the participants in either group had prior knowledge of L2 (experimental group $M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.81$, control group $M = 11.67$, $SD = 6.12$, $p = .036$). On the PSF subtest, learners in both groups performed slightly better with no statistically significant deviation (experimental group $M = 12.56$, $SD = 2.19$, control group $M = 14.89$, $SD = 2.52$, $p = .052$). The NWF subtest, which included CLS and WRC sections, was discontinued because both groups failed to produce any correct answers in the first line. Therefore, the WRF subtest was not administered during the pre-test phase (Table 2).

Table 2
Mean (SD) on DIBELS Pre-Test in Both Groups

Pre-Test	Control	Experimental	<i>p</i>
LNF	11.67(6.12)	6.44(1.81)	.036
PSF	14.89(2.52)	12.56(2.19)	.052
NWF	0(0)	0(0)	–
WRF	0(0)	0(0)	–

Descriptive statistics derived from the DIBELS post-test at the end of the intervention indicate that the experimental group achieved great fluency gains on all subtests. On the LNF post-measurement, the experimental group demonstrated a higher mean score (experimental group $M = 20.44$, $SD = 8.78$, control group $M = 13.78$, $SD = 8.35$, $p = .118$). On the PSF subtest, a higher mean score was also present in the experimental group (experimental group $M = 24.44$, $SD = 5.53$, control group $M = 17.33$, $SD = 6.42$, $p = .023$). Similarly, in the NWF section, the experimental group achieved a higher mean score compared to the control group (experimental group $M = 35.89$, $SD = 21.81$, control group $M = 13.67$, $SD = 12.59$, $p = .018$). Finally, in the WRF subtest, the experimental group recorded a notably higher mean (experimental group $M = 8.89$, $SD = 3.30$, control group $M = 2.11$, $SD = 2.52$, $p < .001$) (Table 3).

Table 3
Mean (SD) on DIBELS Post-Test in Both Groups

Post-Test	Control	Experimental	<i>p</i>
LNF	13.78(8.35)	20.44(8.78)	.118
PSF	17.33(6.42)	24.44(5.53)	.023
NWF	13.67(12.59)	35.89(21.81)	.018
WRF	2.11(2.52)	8.89(3.30)	< .001

A comparison of the raw and final scores in L2 reveals significant progress in the experimental group compared to the control group. In the control group, mean scores showed modest improvement: LNF increased from 11.67 to 13.78 ($p = .069$), PSF from 14.89 to 17.33 ($p = .309$), NWF from .00 to 13.67 ($p = .012$) and WRF from .00 to 2.11 ($p = .036$). These results suggest that there was a slight improvement in the PSF and NWF tests in the control group (Table 4). In contrast, the experimental group demonstrated statistically significant gains across all measures in language literacy performance: LNF escalated from 6.44 to 20.44 ($p = .001$), PSF from 12.56 to 24.44 ($p < .001$), NWF from .00 to 35.89 ($p = .001$) and WRF from .00 to 8.89 ($p < .001$) (Tables 4–5).

Table 4
Mean (SD) for the DIBELS Scores in Pre- and Post-Measurements in the Control Group

Control group	Pre-	Post-	p
LNF	11.67(6.12)	13.78(8.35)	.069
PSF	14.89(2.52)	17.33(6.42)	.309
NWF	0(0)	13.67(12.59)	.012
WRF	0(0)	2.11(2.52)	.036

Table 5
Mean (SD) for the DIBELS Scores in Pre- and Post-Measurements in the Experimental Group

Experimental group	Pre-	Post-	p
LNF	6.44(1.81)	20.44(8.78)	.001
PSF	12.56(2.19)	24.44(5.53)	< .001
NWF	0(0)	35.89(21.81)	.001
WRF	0(0)	8.89(3.30)	< .001

The Tool for Investigating Reading Difficulties by Porpodas, the Greek assessment test, was administered to both groups midway through the intervention. This test was administered to evaluate linguistic competency in L1 and to determine whether and how L1 mediates L2 acquisition. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 6. The control group scored higher on the NWR test (experimental group $M = 5.56$, $SD = 3.64$, control group $M = 8.89$, $SD = 4.23$, $p = .092$). No statistically significant differences were found between the groups in the PSF subtest (experimental group $M = 10.44$, $SD = 2.30$, control group $M = 10.44$, $SD = 3.36$,

$p = .999$) or in the RCT subtest (experimental group $M = 10.56$, $SD = 3.81$, control group $M = 9.44$, $SD = 4.03$, $p = .557$).

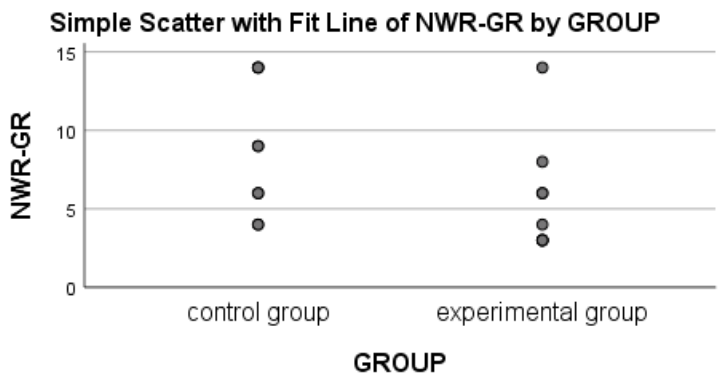
Table 6
Mean (SD) for Porpodas in Both Groups

	Control	Experimental	p
NWRGR	8.89(4.23)	5.56(3.64)	.092
PSFGR	10.44(3.36)	10.44(2.3)	.999
RCTGR	9.44(4.03)	10.56(3.81)	.557

Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

1. The test results that were collected and then analysed indicate the following: No statistically significant group differences were found on the pre-test PSF subtest. On LNF, however, the experimental group scored significantly lower than the control group at baseline ($p = .036$), indicating that the experimental group began from a lower starting point. The examination was discontinued after the LNF and the PSF subtests since all learners from both groups failed to produce any correct answers on the CLS subpart. In other words, the general performance (mean scaled score) of both groups shows that YLs in both schools had no prior knowledge of L2.
2. Statistically significant differences between the scaled score means of the two groups are reported for one attribute of the Greek assessment battery. On average, the experimental group scored lower on NWR, an attribute reflecting letter/sound combination and decoding ability. Specifically, 5.56 compared to 8.89 for NWR suggests that the control group has slightly better developed reading skills. Figure 3 demonstrates that the NWR scores cluster around the lower levels of the score scale, whereas scores for the control group are distributed evenly across all levels. Since this discrepancy pertains to only one attribute of the Greek assessment battery and both groups' scores are distributed across the entire scale, we assume that both groups exhibit no statistically significant differences in their L1 development.

Figure 3
Comparison of the Two Groups' Results on Porpodas NWR



3. Statistically significant differences between the scores of the two groups are clearly evident in the DIBELS post-tests (LNF, PSF, NWF, and WRF) administered at the end of the six-month period of L2 exposure. Specifically, participants in the intervention group exhibited remarkable progress compared to the control group on all attributes of the DIBELS assessment battery as can be inferred from Figure 4.

Figure 4
Clustered Bar Mean Comparing the Progress of the DIBELS Test between the Two Groups

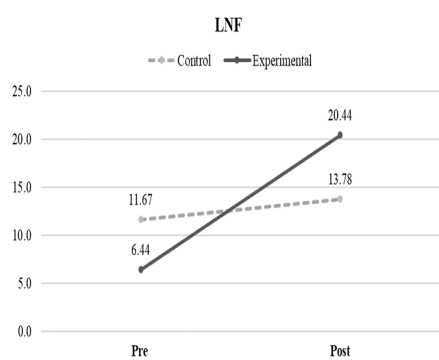


Figure 4a. Mean scores on the LNF test in both groups across time

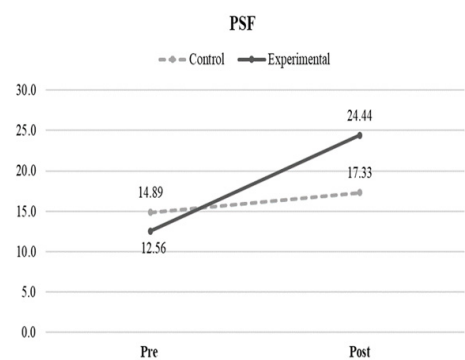


Figure 4b. Mean scores on the PSF test in both groups across time

Figure 4 continued

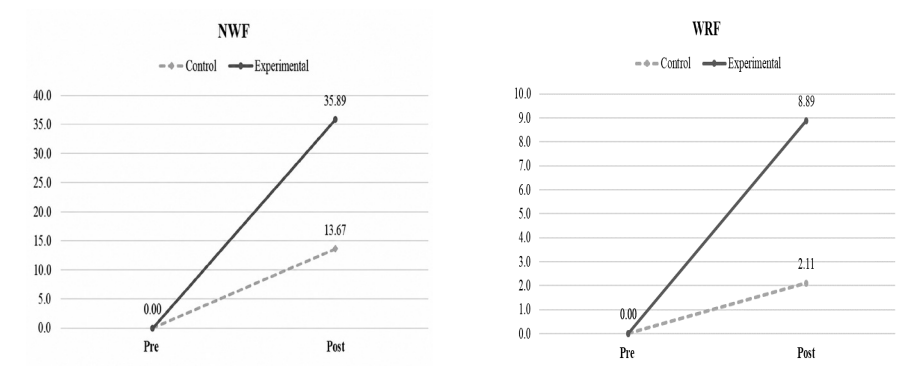


Figure 4c. Mean scores on the NWF test in both groups across time

Figure 4d. Mean scores on the WRF test in both groups across time

This visual presentation reflects significant improvement by the experimental group in L2 across all measured attributes, suggesting a potentially robust relationship between shared reading and L2 reading development in the very early stages. However, further analysis of individual performance reveals considerable variability in most attributes. For example, on the LNF subtest, a standard deviation (SD) of 9.7 indicates a wide dispersion: three out of nine students scored above 25, four ranged between 16 and 24, and the remaining three scored below the benchmark. On the PSF subtest, the SD is 6.431, with all learners scoring above the benchmark. On the CLS subtest, the SD is notably high at 22.045, reflecting a bimodal distribution of scores: five students scored above 36 and successfully read simple consonant-vowel-consonant words, while the remaining four scored below 19, struggling to read unfamiliar English words. In contrast, participants exhibited greater homogeneity on the WRF measure, with an SD of 3.812. Here, four students read five to six words, while five students managed to read 11 to 13 words.

The nature of this study combined with the above results implies that further analysis is needed to identify whether relations exist between L1 linguistic competence and L2 procedural and conceptual development. To address the second research question and examine whether differences in L1 development may partially account for the observed variations in L2 performance, additional analyses were conducted. The results are presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7
NWR-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Experimental Group)

		NWRGR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
NWRGR	Pearson Correlation	1	.480	.427	.577	.422
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.191	.252	.104	.258
	N	9	9	9	9	9

Table 8
PSF-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Experimental Group)

		PSFGR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
PSFGR	Pearson Correlation	1	.194	.288	.425	.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.309	.226	.127	.313
	N	9	9	9	9	9

Table 9
RCT-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Experimental Group)

		RCTGR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
RCTGR	Pearson Correlation	1	.414	.307	.631	.593
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.268	.421	.068	.093
	N	9	9	9	9	9

The results indicate positive correlations between Porpodas’ NWR and the participants’ performance on the English NWF ($r = .577$), which may be regarded as indicative of mastering the ability to read since LNF and PSF are precursors to reading (Table 7). Likewise, moderate-to-strong correlations (though not statistically significant at this sample size) were observed between Porpodas’ RCT and scores in NWF ($r = .631$) and WRF ($r = .593$) (Table 9). Finally, a positive correlation was found between Porpodas’ PSF and NWF ($r = .425$) (Table 8). Overall, high performance on the L1 NWF and RCT was associated with stronger performance on the English NWF at post-test. In other words, students whose L1 NWR and RCT performance was classified as average to above average tended to demonstrate greater progress in L2 reading-related skills.

The control group also completed the Greek assessment battery. Additional analyses were conducted to see whether there is any correlation between the Greek and the English assessment tests among learners who had no purposeful exposure to text and reading.

Table 10
NWR-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Control Group)

		NWR-GR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
NWR-GR	Pearson Correlation	1	.407	.545	-.177	-.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.277	.129	.649	.907
	N	9	9	9	9	9

Table 11
PSF-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Control Group)

		PSF-GR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
PSF-GR	Pearson Correlation	1	.517	.612	.317	.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.154	.080	.405	.633
	N	9	9	9	9	9

Table 12
RCT-GR and DIBELS Post-Tests—Correlations (Control Group)

		RCT-GR	LNF Post-Test	PSF Post-Test	NWF Post-Test	WRF Post-Test
RCT-GR	Pearson Correlation	1	-.026	.423	-.403	-.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.946	.257	.282	.718
	N	9	9	9	9	9

An interesting pattern emerges when examining the results. LNF and PSF are highly correlated with NWR-GR ($r = .407$ and $r = .545$ respectively) and with PSF-GR ($r = .517$ and $r = .612$ respectively), (Table 10). Correlations with the other subparts are mostly negative: NWF and WRF are negatively correlated with NWR-GR ($r = -.177$ and $r = -.046$ respectively) and with RCT-GR ($r = -.403$ and $r = -.141$ respectively), (Table 12). PSF-GR, on the other hand, presents positive correlations with all attributes (Table 11). The data presented in these tables is discussed further in the following section.

The research data presented in Tables 10, 11, and 12 indicate that a subset of students exposed to L2 shared reading successfully developed effective reading skills. Two participants scored 67 and 69 on the CLS, 15 and 20 on the WRC, and 13 and 12 on the WRF, respectively, and were classified as exhibiting minimal risk, performing well above the benchmark according to DIBELS end-of-year evaluations for native speakers. Another two students scored 45 and 42 on the CLS, 12 and 10 on the NWF, and 11 on the WRF, respectively, and were also characterised as facing minimal risk, scoring above the benchmark on the CLS, NWF, and WRF subtests. The remaining five participants ($N = 5$) showed notable progress, improving their DIBELS status from non-responding to below benchmark, providing evidence of L2 reading development. This functional relationship, indicating that the progress is directly attributable to the intervention, is further supported by the comparatively smaller improvement observed in the control group. Despite receiving standard L2 instruction through the formal syllabus over the same period, the control group demonstrated relatively minimal gains.

Discussion

However, the findings should be interpreted with caution. It is important to note that although all participants in the intervention showed improvement in the sub-skills, considerable variability was observed in their performance. Notably, five out of the nine learners encountered difficulty in reading simple consonant-vowel-consonant words.

One possible explanation for this variation lies in differences in L1 linguistic competence. Participants with advanced L1 linguistic competence appeared to make greater fluency gains in L2 reading development, suggesting that L1 competence is a strong developmental predictor. More specifically, four learners who achieved the highest score in DIBELS post-test had also obtained the highest score on the Greek assessment test. The only exception was one learner who did well on the Greek test but was a low achiever on DIBELS. These results address the second research question. The findings suggest that well-developed L1 skills facilitate the acquisition of a second language and, more specifically, the Greek attributes NWR, PSF, and RCT were found to significantly predict performance on the English NWF and WRF measures. The subtest results indicate a relationship between L1 linguistic competence and learners' L2 developmental outcomes. However, to gain a more complete understanding of the nature of the relationships between L1 skills and L2 reading development, further examination of the correlation results from the control group is necessary.

The learners in the control group had developed native language-related skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge, which they drew upon when working in L2. They successfully transferred this knowledge to language-independent skills. This explains the positive correlations identified between L1 skills and L2 PSF (.545), NWF (.612), and LNF (.423). These findings align with the idea that a significant overlap in sounds allows phonological awareness (PA) to function as a specific language-independent skill, facilitating transfer. Similarly, one could speculate that letter knowledge, encompassing knowledge of letters and their sounds, is largely language-specific. However, given that ten letters and their corresponding sounds are shared between the two languages (Aa, Ee, Ii, Kk, M, N, Oo, Ss, T, Zz), it can be argued that letter knowledge and letter-sound associations exhibit traits of language-independent skills. This may account for the positive correlations observed in the control group between PSF and LNF (0.517) and between NWR and LNF (0.407). Put simply, learners with well-developed L1 reading skills (NWR) were able to identify letters and segment sounds in L2 by transferring their L1 letter and sound knowledge. When examining the transfer of language-specific skills, however, focus should be on the quality and quantity of the input provided.

Respectively, no positive correlations were reported between L1 performance and DIBELS NWF and WRF, as these are language-specific skills whose improvement depends on the quality and quantity of input. However, high negative correlations warrant attention. Successful L1 learners scored noticeably low on the NWF and WRC subtests, which required reading words in English. Based on the learners' test responses, it became evident that they refrained from taking risks or producing responses they believed to be incorrect. During the DIBELS post-test, successful learners often avoided certain subtests, stating that they did not want to continue because they did not know how to read in English. In contrast, less successful learners attempted the tasks and produced some correct responses on CLS subtest, which may explain the observed negative correlations.

The study findings suggest that learners achieve greater fluency gains through immersion in a print-rich environment and the use of implicit, print referencing techniques. The results of this exploratory study challenge the notion that implicit contexts for learning literacy—such as opportunities for literacy-related play and high-quality physical literacy environments, which provide children with resources like books, visual print materials, and literacy-related props—are inadequate for fostering the development of emergent literacy in many children (Piasta, 2016). It highlights the importance of employing storytelling sessions and shared book reading to support young learners' emergent literacy development in L2. While the results are promising, they should be interpreted with caution due to the limited sample size and the variation in progress among the learners. Overall, the results of the study contribute to

our understanding of the complex interplay between L1 and L2 skills and the factors that influence L2 reading development in young learners.

While L1 competence plays a significant role in L2 development, other factors may also contribute to the observed variation in learner progress. Individual differences, such as cognitive abilities, working memory capacity, and phonological processing skills could play a crucial role in how children benefit from exposure to L2 print materials. As suggested by Cummins's (1979) Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, these individual attributes interact with the quality and quantity of L2 input to facilitate language transfer and acquisition. Motivation is another key factor likely to influence L2 literacy development in this context. The study's use of age-appropriate, engaging storybooks may have affected learners' motivation levels. As Krashen (2004) emphasises, compelling comprehensible input is crucial for language acquisition. Therefore, individual preferences for certain story types or themes could impact engagement levels and, consequently, learning outcomes. Furthermore, the home environment and parental involvement, although not directly measured in this study, may have contributed to the observed variation. The third stage of the intervention involved parents reading books with their children at home. Differences in parental reading habits, attitudes towards L2 learning, and the quality of these shared reading experiences could have influenced children's progress. This aligns with research by Burgess et al. (2002) and Yeung and King (2016), who highlight the importance of the home literacy environment for both L1 and L2 development. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between L1 and L2 skills more comprehensively, including the role of L2 input and instructional approaches. Future studies should consider incorporating measures of cognitive abilities, motivation, and home literacy practices to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing L2 literacy development in home-like environments.

Limitations and Future Research

Based on the analysis of the experimental study on emergent L2 literacy among Greek young learners of English, several limitations and avenues for future research emerge. The study acknowledges the importance of letter-sound associations alongside oral language and phonological awareness. These foundational skills, fostered through informal instruction in a home-like literacy environment, are crucial for emergent literacy development. The study's methodology effectively captures progress in these areas, demonstrating the potential benefits of exposure to enriched English print stories. However, the limitations of a small

sample size underscore the need for future research to adopt longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse cohorts. Due to the very small sample, the results obtained from this research project cannot be generalised to the larger population. Thus, future investigations could benefit from a longitudinal approach, potentially incorporating experimental manipulations to establish causal relationships more definitely. Employing diverse methodologies, including eye-tracking technologies, could offer deeper insights into how young learners engage with text and develop emergent literacy skills in L2. Finally, this research opens the door to comparing the effectiveness of various types of literacy interventions in L2 settings. Investigating different reading contexts and materials, as well as their impact on a broader range of early literacy abilities, would enrich our understanding of effective strategies for supporting emergent learners of English. This could include examining the role of digital literacy tools and their efficacy in fostering emergent literacy skills in a second language.

Conclusion

This study has explored the efficacy of literacy-based instruction in developing emergent second-language literacy skills in young learners prior to formal literacy instruction. The findings reveal that all participants demonstrated varying degrees of improvement, dependent on their L1 linguistic competence. However, although not all learners achieved the same level of reading proficiency, they all developed significant, emergent sub-skills that are precursors to reading and are likely to positively influence their subsequent L2 growth and cognition.

Being a holistic approach, storybook reading not only enhances low-level reading skills but also fosters cognitive, emotional, and social development in children. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* highlights the virtues of self-control, well-being, happiness, and the inevitable journey of growth and transformation. In contrast, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* illustrates that life is filled with obstacles one must face and overcome. Meanwhile, *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* reminds us to maintain a positive attitude, no matter what challenges come our way. During shared reading, participants interact with texts, construct language, and develop complex cognitive processes. The benefits of early, systematic exposure to text and reading are widely acknowledged, and this research extends their applicability to the L2 learning context, providing a framework for language teachers to integrate storybooks and shared reading into their instruction without requiring additional resources or effort. Teachers can structure their

instruction including storybooks and shared reading in the L2 classroom without the need for substantial changes to their syllabus or curriculum.

The use of authentic, age-appropriate literature activates learners' imagination and introduces them to engaging, imaginary worlds that influence their emotional and behavioural development (Mart, 2012). Exposure to complex linguistic structures contributes significantly to their syntactic and structural development, while vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical control can also be improved (Krashen, 2004). When considering young learners, it is crucial to recognise that incorporating stories into the daily curriculum results in a positive and enjoyable learning experience that reduces anxiety and cultivates a positive disposition towards foreign language learning and education overall.

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Click or Chalk: Comparing EFL Reading Outcomes in Saudi Education

Abstract

The swift transition to online learning platforms has sparked debates on the comparative efficacy of virtual environments in contrast to traditional face-to-face classroom settings, particularly in areas where in-person education has been the customary practice. This study examines the influence of these two modes of learning on the reading comprehension of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at Northern Border University in Saudi Arabia. The research comprised a group of 35 female undergraduate English majors, aged 18–24, who successfully finished the “Reading Course 2,” either using an online platform or in a conventional classroom environment. The research utilized a post-test for reading comprehension and conducted in-depth interviews to evaluate student perspectives. The findings revealed that there were no notable disparities in academic performance between the two groups. Nevertheless, the majority of students expressed a strong preference for in-person instruction, emphasizing the importance of direct teacher involvement and active participation with their peers. They stated that these factors significantly improved their learning experience and motivation. The findings suggest that although online learning can achieve similar academic achievements as traditional approaches, enhancing virtual engagement and interpersonal relationships is essential for attaining greater student happiness and emulating the comprehensive advantages of in-person education.

Keywords: online learning, reading comprehension, traditional learning, education technology

In recent years, the worldwide education sector has experienced substantial changes due to various circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid technological progress, and the increased integration of digital technologies in

education. Saudi Arabia, specifically, has not been immune to these changes. The country's Vision 2030 emphasizes the importance of educational technology and online learning in diversifying and boosting the nation's economy. This vision has resulted in significant expenditures on technical infrastructure, the creation of digital curricula, and the improvement of instructors' skills in digital teaching methods. Moreover, it facilitates online education by implementing virtual classrooms, extending the availability of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and collaborating with international technology companies.

The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the move towards online learning, necessitating a swift transfer from traditional in-person teaching to digital platforms. This transition presented a distinctive chance to assess and contrast the effectiveness of these various instructional approaches. Traditionally, in-person learning has been the prevailing method of education. Nevertheless, the increased dependence on online learning platforms in Saudi Arabia due to the pandemic introduced educators and students to a novel learning paradigm. There is a growing need to evaluate the efficacy of online and traditional in-class learning environments, especially in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. This assessment aims to understand the effects, difficulties, and advantages of these environments on educational outcomes.

Online learning is becoming a common necessity in many educational institutions globally, acting as a crucial test of its efficiency and impact on learning outcomes. Kerres and Buchner's (2022) research has examined the pandemic's effects on educational methodologies and the potential consequences for educational technology advancement. Their research emphasizes the crucial role that digital technologies play in maintaining educational continuity while simultaneously acknowledging the difficulties in assessing their direct influence on learning outcomes. The authors contend that evaluations of these impacts must take into account the varied institutional, cultural, and national contexts. They propose two potential paths for education after the crisis: one that aims to return to the norms that existed before the crisis, and another that uses recent experiences to bring about substantial educational changes. Studies have also investigated the worth of online education for both learners and educators. In their study, Singh and Meena (2023) investigated the disparity between the anticipated and realized advantages of virtual classrooms for staff members and students in higher education during the pandemic. Their findings suggest that both groups had inflated expectations compared to the real benefits they received. However, the presence of a supportive learning environment with fewer hindrances enabled them to derive greater advantages from virtual classrooms. Nevertheless, substantial obstacles persist, including issues with network connectivity, the absence of suitable professional contexts, and insufficient training resources.

Conversely, alternative research has emphasized the disadvantages of virtual learning, especially when it is hastily deployed as a temporary solution rather than a carefully executed transition to online education. Researchers have identified digital competence among learners, the integration of digital skills, and the efficiency of online assessments as areas for improvement. However, there is evidence from research that supports the efficacy of online learning. Studies have shown that virtual classrooms can provide similar or even better academic results compared to traditional in-person teaching, given specific circumstances.

Related Literature

Researchers have conducted numerous studies to evaluate the effectiveness of online learning for both learners and instructors. Singh and Meena (2023) analyze the gap between the expected and actual benefits of virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic for faculty members and students in higher education. They found that both groups had higher expectations of the benefits they would receive from virtual classrooms compared to the actual benefits they experienced. Moreover, the study found that a more favorable and supportive learning environment with fewer obstacles allowed faculty members and students to experience greater benefits from the virtual classroom experience than initially anticipated. For faculty members, the major challenges included network connectivity, followed by a lack of a professional environment, teaching materials, and personal computers. Among students, the lack of a professional environment and teaching materials at home were the major challenges, along with network connectivity and the need for personal computers or laptops. Furthermore, Forbes et al. (2023) identified communication and engagement as significant areas requiring attention and improvement for students regarding online learning.

One of the disadvantages of virtual learning is that it started as a crisis-response transition, best understood as emergency remote teaching, rather than a comprehensive shift to effective online education. There is a significant need for digital competence among learners, as well as the integration of digital skills into the teaching and learning process (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Mabrook & Mabrook, 2020). Badia Hakim (2020) underscores the significant challenges that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia encounter with technology integration, including inadequate resources and low student engagement. Saleh and Meccawy (2022) identify that the paramount obstacle encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors within online educational settings is student-centric—encompassing issues of participation, motivation, academic integrity during assessments, and a lack of student accountability in their

learning journey. Motivation is a significant factor in this study, as many studies confirm a strong correlation between motivation and reading comprehension (Alenizi, 2019; Brozko, Shiel, & Topping, 2008; Wigfield et al., 2008; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006).

Online assessment has its concerns, with teachers doubting its effectiveness (Abduh, 2021; Momeni, 2022). Mabrook (2020) found several drawbacks to distance learning. The majority of students during exams used more than one device to look for answers to the questions, and a high percentage of participants admitted to copying answers during the exam. As a result of inadequate control over final exams, there was a clear inflation in online students' grades. However, many studies support and prove the efficacy of online learning. According to Al-Nuaim (2012), the implementation of virtual classrooms in an e-learning program at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia did not yield any significant differences in the academic performance of online students when compared to face-to-face students enrolled in the same courses and taught by the same instructors. Furthermore, because of the various difficulties EFL students have encountered during the pandemic, they hold different perspectives on online learning. Hezam and Mahyoub (2022) found that EFL Saudi students have positive attitudes towards online learning, although they faced difficulties adapting to this mode. Conversely, Al-Nofaie (2020) suggested that many students preferred in-class learning, despite showing high levels of motivation during online classes. Some students indicated that home environments are distracting. Additionally, students strongly preferred in-class learning because online learning lacks physical interaction. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, students had problems adapting to online English lessons and could not forego traditional classes (Marsudi, 2021).

Reading skills have always been a major challenge to Saudi second language learners (Alkhaleefah, 2023; Ahmed & Ahmed, 2023; Alotaibi, 2022). Alkhaleefah (2017) highlights the reading challenges faced by Saudi EFL learners, revealing significant weaknesses in their reading skills. The study employed a think-aloud method and involved four male EFL students—categorized as two proficient readers and two poor readers—who read narrative and expository texts. The findings indicated that both groups encountered substantial difficulties, particularly with unknown vocabulary and complex text structures. Poor readers, in particular, demonstrated limited metacognitive awareness and struggled to effectively employ reading strategies, often failing to use context clues or verify their guesses about unknown words. These students tended to rely more heavily on dictionaries and exhibited less effective problem-solving skills compared to their more proficient peers. This lack of strategic processing highlights a critical weakness in their ability to comprehend and engage with English texts, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to enhance reading skills and strategic processing among Saudi EFL learners (Alkhaleefah, 2017).

However, during the pandemic, Saudi EFL university students reported positive perceptions about the use of e-learning sessions to improve reading comprehension skills. We have confirmed that these online sessions are suitable for employing reading strategies, and they report increased motivation and an environment conducive to independent learning. Female students expressed higher satisfaction with e-learning compared to male students (Alhumsi et al., 2021). Moreover, Oraif and Elyas (2021) conducted a study to examine the level of engagement exhibited by EFL learners in online courses using a designated school platform in Saudi Arabia. The participants consisted of 379 female high school EFL students. The findings indicated that the learners demonstrated a considerable degree of engagement in terms of participation and interaction in the online courses, leading to their overall satisfaction with the experience of attending English classes. Furthermore, the results revealed a notable level of emotional engagement among the students within the online classroom environment. Akbari et al. (2021) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of virtual teaching in improving the reading comprehension skills of Iranian undergraduate EFL students. They compared three groups: a control group taught using traditional methods, a virtual group taught through web-based technologies, and a blended group that used a combination of traditional and innovative methods. The results showed that the virtual group, which received instruction through web-based technologies, exhibited significant improvement in reading comprehension compared to the other two groups. The findings suggest that virtual teaching can be a valuable approach to enhancing reading comprehension skills in EFL university students, providing opportunities for interactive learning, and overcoming geographical barriers. In the same vein, Patra et al. (2022) demonstrated that e-learning significantly improved reading comprehension and motivation in Iranian EFL learners over traditional teaching methods, emphasizing the integration of e-learning in EFL instruction. Moreover, Al-Jarf (2019, 2021) found that using an online reading course from home as a supplement to in-class reading instruction helped enhance EFL students' reading skills in English. Furthermore, integrating graded reading websites and applications into learning environments can improve students' reading comprehension skills (Alghizzi & Elyas, 2022).

The need to compare online outcomes to traditional class outcomes is crucial to fill the gap by examining the differences in performance in both settings. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine the efficacy of online learning and compare its outcomes with face-to-face learning. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- a) Are there significant differences between the performance of EFL Saudi students in online learning mode and face-to-face learning mode?
- b) What are the most significant differences between online and face-to-face learning?

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the educational outcomes for students studying a reading course online versus face-to-face. The course “Interaction 2” by Pamela Hartmann and Elaine Kirn, with the Teacher’s Edition by Carol Pineiro (Silver Edition), was taught during the Fall 2021 semester. The course was methodically structured to enhance students’ reading comprehension and analytical skills. It consisted of two 50-minute lectures per week, spanning 16 weeks. Throughout the semester, chapters 1 to 8 were covered. The content was classified into three primary domains:

- a) **Breaking Down Long Paragraphs:** Students were taught to break down complex paragraphs into manageable sections by identifying topic sentences, supporting details, and conclusions. Students achieved this through annotation exercises, where they highlighted or underlined key parts of the text and summarized each section in their own words.
- b) **Focused Vocabulary and Contextual Clues:** The course emphasized understanding challenging vocabulary within the context of paragraphs. Before providing definitions, the course encouraged students to infer meanings using contextual clues. Activities included matching words to definitions and using vocabulary in new sentences, thereby improving both phrases and comprehension.
- c) **Interactive Discussions and Analysis:** Group discussions played a crucial role, where students analyzed paragraph content and structure. We guided them to ask questions, share interpretations, and engage in critical thinking, fostering a collaborative learning environment that enriched their understanding of the text.

This study employed a combination of online and in-person approaches to teach the course in reading comprehension (Sample Lesson Plan, Appendix 1). The online cohort interacted with the course content using a *Blackboard* Learning Management System (LMS), which allowed for both real-time and self-paced learning. The teacher and students interacted immediately during synchronous sessions through video conferencing. Asynchronous components consisted of self-paced activities, such as reviewing courses, finishing assignments, and engaging in discussion forums. The digital platform also included automatic tests and assignments that delivered instant feedback, enabling students to track their progress. The teacher taught the in-person group in a conventional classroom environment, providing direct instruction, prompt feedback, and on-the-spot adaptations based on the students’ needs. The classroom exercises focused on deconstructing lengthy paragraphs, comprehending language using contextual hints, and participating in critical analysis, analogous to the online version, but

with greater impromptu and dynamic interactions. Both instructional methods followed the same curriculum and learning objectives, guaranteeing uniformity in educational content. The study later evaluated the efficiency of these two approaches in improving students' reading comprehension and analytical abilities.

First, the quantitative component of the research utilized a post-test-only design. The online group took the test during the spring semester of 2023. Both the online and face-to-face groups had completed the course a year before allowing us to explore the long-term effects of both approaches on their learning outcomes and perceptions. This timeframe ensures that our data reflects the sustained impact of online and face-to-face learning environments, particularly in the context of the pandemic and its aftermath. The "Reading Course 2" uses the Interaction educational syllabus, specifically the "Interaction 2 Reading" edition. Through a mix of different text types and engaging activities, this syllabus aims to enhance students' reading comprehension and analytical skills. It focuses on enhancing critical thinking and interpretation by helping students identify important details, derive meaning from context through examples, opposites, and connecting words, and understand context through punctuation, other sentences, and logic. Additionally, it aims to develop synthesis skills by teaching students to identify words and phrases that work together. The thematic units organize the content, covering a wide array of subjects and ensuring a comprehensive approach to reading and analytical skills development. The structured teaching method not only enhances students' comprehension and maintains their engagement, but also ensures uniform instruction for both study groups under the guidance of the same instructor. The study involved two distinct groups of students: one group engaged in the course online, while the other experienced the same curriculum through traditional face-to-face instruction. We then statistically compared the results from the two groups to see if the mode of instruction caused any significant differences in reading comprehension outcomes.

Second, we implemented a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews to complement the quantitative data. We selected participants from both the online and face-to-face groups using a purposive sampling technique to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. These interviews aimed to delve into the participants' subjective experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards their respective reading courses.

Participants

The study involved 35 female undergraduate students majoring in English at Northern Border University's Rafha campus. All participants were aged between 18–24 and were selected based on the criterion that they had completed

“Reading Course 2” either after or during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each participant had studied and passed “Reading Course 2.” The researchers set specific criteria for participant selection, particularly for the online group, which justified the constrained sample size in the study. They exclusively selected students who had taken “Reading Course 2” online during the pandemic—a period when they could not attend campus or meet instructors face-to-face. Under normal circumstances, where online learning typically intersperses face-to-face interactions, this period served as an invaluable natural experiment, offering insights that might not have been as readily observable. The results from this period thus provide a robust basis for comparing the online approach to traditional in-person education, free from the confounding variables that typically accompany hybrid learning models. This criterion was essential for evaluating the efficacy of online learning under conditions where traditional face-to-face interactions were not possible. Additionally, the overall small number of participants can be attributed to selecting students from the same academic level, to effectively control variables. Some of these students took the reading course online during the pandemic, while others enrolled in it face-to-face post-pandemic, creating a naturally limited pool of participants fitting these specific conditions. This intentional restriction made it possible to more accurately attribute any variations in reading comprehension outcomes to the mode of instruction, rather than variations in academic preparedness or ability.

Because Saudi Arabian educational practices fully segregate classes by gender, the study exclusively involved female participants. This gender-specific participant selection was critical to controlling for variables related to teaching practices and instructor efficacy. Having one instructor for both the online and face-to-face groups ensured that the teaching methodology remained consistent across both study settings. This uniformity was critical in minimizing variations that could arise from different instructional styles or interactions, which otherwise skew the results and allowed the research to focus solely on the impact of the learning environment—online versus face-to-face—without the confounding influence of varying instructor characteristics.

Instruments

The study utilized two instruments to gather data. Students who took the “Reading Course 2” both online and in-person received the first instrument, a pre-test. The test assesses students’ reading comprehension skills and aligns with the course objectives. It included an upper-intermediate English reading passage and four questions, each of which targeted specific reading objectives. The first and second questions utilized multiple-choice formats to evaluate students’ mastery of deriving meaning from context. The third question

summarized the passage and required students to fill in the gaps with provided words, thereby assessing their ability to identify cohesive words and phrases. The fourth question asked students to match given statements to the corresponding paragraphs in which they appeared, testing their ability to identify important details within the text. Collectively, these questions comprehensively evaluate the students' reading comprehension skills at an upper-intermediate English level. We divided the participants into two groups: the first group included 17 students who face-to-face studied the "Reading Course 2" following the COVID-19 outbreak. The second group consisted of 18 students who studied the "Reading Course 2" virtually during the pandemic. Both groups were then given a post-test directly related to the course content to evaluate the effectiveness of the mode of instruction they received. We designed the tests to be comparable, based on the "Reading Course 2" syllabus. We revised the test to ensure its validity after conducting a pilot test with a different group of students from the same university. We excluded this pilot group from the main study to detect any shortcomings in the research design.

The second instrument was an in-depth interview with participants from both groups to explore their perceptions of online versus face-to-face learning. The interviews featured open-ended questions centered on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and their comparison of online learning to traditional classroom settings. Regarding the interview protocol, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with four students from each group who volunteered to participate. The primary questions asked were:

- a) What are the best advantages you have found in online learning or face-to-face learning in the reading courses?
- b) Do you think that online learning or face-to-face learning motivated you in the reading course?

However, to gather more comprehensive data, we also included several follow-up sub-questions based on participants' responses to extract more detailed and related information. These sub-questions included:

- a) What recurring themes and patterns emerge from the students' interview responses regarding their experiences with online and face-to-face learning environments?
- b) How do significant statements in the interview transcripts relate to the research questions?
- c) What overarching themes emerge from the coded data, and how do these themes shed light on how students perceive both online and face-to-face learning?
- d) How does the thematic analysis contribute to understanding the differences in student experiences between online and face-to-face learning environments?

For the qualitative data analysis, we employed thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns within the interview responses. To ensure accuracy,

the coding procedure included transcription of all interviews. We then conducted open coding on the transcripts, generating codes based on significant statements related to the research questions. Finally, the researchers reviewed the categories and identified overarching themes that emerged from the data. The researchers then analyzed these themes to derive significant insights and conclusions. This detailed approach to the interview protocol and qualitative data analysis ensures the study's transparency and reproducibility, providing a comprehensive understanding of the students' perceptions and experiences with online and face-to-face learning environments.

Data Collection and Procedure

Throughout this investigation, we meticulously considered ethical considerations to ensure the protection and welfare of all participants. We thoroughly briefed participants on the study's objective and assured them that their involvement was optional before the test began. Each participant provided informed permission, indicating their understanding of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw without facing any adverse repercussions. We conducted the tests anonymously to avoid any potential anxiety or discomfort, ensuring that individual replies could not be associated with specific individuals. This method not only protected the participants' privacy and confidentiality but also alleviated any potential stress stemming from concerns about recognition. We conducted the testing of both groups simultaneously in a controlled setting to ensure impartial treatment of all participants and to eliminate any potential biases or external factors that could skew the results. Moreover, the study excluded participants who had completed the "Reading Course 2" in a hybrid format. We decided to exclude certain participants after careful deliberation, ensuring a transparent and equitable comparison between the fully online and face-to-face educational methods. We effectively communicated the decision to remove these participants, gaining their comprehension and consent in advance.

Results and Discussion

Reliability Analyses

First, Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega indices were calculated for the total sum of the items. These data will allow us to determine whether or not the two primary item dimensions used are consistent and reliable. Table 1

reveals values for alpha and omega exceeding the .70 threshold, a cut-off point widely acknowledged by the scientific community (e.g., McDonald, 1999; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Therefore, the internal consistency and reliability of the items in both dimensions are satisfactory and suitable for bolstering the results obtained in the previous analyses.

Table 1
Summary of the Reliability Analyses

		Online teaching (N = 18)	In-class teaching (N = 17)	Total sample (N = 35)
Total sum	Cronbach's Alpha	.734	.725	.722
	McDonald's Omega	.777	.752	.795

Normality Tests

Under the following hypothesis, we used the Shapiro-Wilk test to analyze the sample’s normal distribution, as advised in the literature (e.g., Hanusz et al., 2016), when dealing with 50 or fewer participants:

H0: There are no significant differences between the normal distribution and the sample distribution ($p > .05$).

H1: There are significant differences between the normal distribution and the distribution of the sample ($p < .05$)

As shown in Table 2, the Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the vast majority of items were not adjusted to the normal distribution, except for i02, which was the unique item adjusted to the normal distribution. That is why in the next heading, means differences were performed using in the case of non-normal items Mann-Whitney’s U and for the normal item Student’s t-test.

Table 2
Shapiro-Wilk’s Test Results

	SW value [A1]	P
I01	.882	.001
I02	.949	.107
I03	.806	< .001[A2]
I04	.845	< .001
Total sum	.920	.014

Means Differences

As previously mentioned, we conducted the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test on items 1, 3, 4, and the total score because they did not meet the normality assumption. We also performed the parametric independent samples Student’s t-test on item 2, as it was the only item that satisfied the normality condition.

For both cases, the initial hypotheses were:
H0: There are no significant differences between the online teaching method and the in-class teaching method ($p > .05$)
H1: There are significant differences between the online teaching method and the in-class teaching method ($p < .05$)

As observed in Table 3, there were no statistically significant differences in any of the analyzed items, nor in the overall item scores. Thus, with this study’s sample, participants’ scores were statistically similar regardless of group.

Table 3
Means Differences Results

	Online teaching (N = 18)		In-class teaching (N = 17)		p
	Mean	SD[A3]	Mean	SD	
I01	3.61	.777	3.41	1.12	.807
I02	3.66	1.68	3.05	1.51	.271[A4]
I03	4.27	3.76	2.64	2.69	.273
I04	3.16	1.75	3.41	1.27	.883
Total sum	14.72	6.78	12.52	5.22	.483

Discussion

The current research study examines the outcomes of online and traditional learning modalities with respect to academic achievement. The unexpected advent of the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of virtual learning environments compared with conventional classroom settings. Regarding the first research question, the results revealed no statistically significant differences in reading comprehension outcomes between online and face-to-face learning formats. The data suggest that students who participated in online classes during the pandemic achieved comparable levels of reading comprehension to those who engaged in traditional in-person classes. However, caution should be exercise when generalizing these findings beyond the studied sample due to the relatively small participant group.

The research aligns with studies suggesting that students' anticipated benefits from virtual classrooms were greater than the actual advantages realized (Singh & Meena, 2023). Moreover, the findings are in agreement with those of Al-Nuaim (2012), who reported no significant disparities in learning outcomes between online and in-person classes. Some problems with network connectivity (Singh & Meena, 2023; Forbes et al., 2023) and the fact that virtual learning is usually an emergency response rather than a long-term move to online education (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Mabrook & Mabrook, 2020) may make virtual learning environments less useful. Consistent with prior research, a majority of students expressed a preference for on-campus classes due to the motivating atmosphere and reduced distractions.

Student 1 (S1):

In class, I focus more because of the teacher's body language. Plus, I wake up early every morning and get ready, which makes me more active than in online classes. However, in online classes, I attend lectures in my bed.

S1 highlights the importance of the physical classroom environment in maintaining focus and engagement. The ability to observe the teacher's body language enhances S1's attentiveness, indicating that non-verbal cues play a significant role in learning. Additionally, the routine of preparing for and attending in-person classes seems to positively affect S1's energy levels and overall readiness to learn. In contrast, the comfort and informality of attending online classes from bed reduce S1's engagement, suggesting that the lack of a structured environment in online learning can lead to decreased focus.

Student 2 (S2):

I could not concentrate in online classes. I was more absentminded during online classes because I could use my phone while the teacher was instructing.

S2 points out the challenges of maintaining concentration in an online learning environment. The ease of distraction, particularly due to the availability of personal devices like phones, hinders S2's ability to focus on the lesson. This indicates that the online setting may lack the discipline and attention that a physical classroom enforces, leading to a more passive learning experience. S2's experience contrasts with studies suggesting the superiority of virtual learning, such as those by Akbari, Tabri, and Chalak (2021). The difference may stem from the idealized conditions often present in experimental settings, which do not fully capture the realities of students' experiences in entirely remote learning environments.

These student viewpoints highlight the intricate nature of online education, especially when compared with traditional in-person learning. Although certain studies have demonstrated favorable results for virtual learning, the firsthand experiences of students such as S1 and S2 highlight difficulties that may not be adequately considered in controlled research environments. The current study scrutinizes online learning in real, non-simulated settings, especially during the pandemic when students solely participated in remote learning without any face-to-face interaction. This approach provides a more accurate depiction of the benefits and drawbacks of online learning in its actual implementation. This approach differs from controlled trials, which often show the online format in optimal conditions, potentially resulting in divergent conclusions. Concerning the second question, the study found consistency with existing literature regarding students' perceptions. The participants appreciated the convenience of accessing courses from home and the ability to revisit recorded lectures whenever needed (S3).

Student 3 (S3):

I can revise directly in my room after the lecture. However, in on-campus classes, there are many distractions after the class.

This advantage is not available in face-to-face instruction. However, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the online learning experience, citing it as falling short of expectations (Singh & Meena, 2023). Forbes et al. (2023) raised further concerns about technical issues, particularly network connectivity, and the lack of motivation and peer feedback typically found in classroom environments, which could negatively impact performance due to the correlation between reading comprehension and motivation (Alenizi, 2019; Brozko, Shiel, & Topping, 2008; Wigfield et al., 2008; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006). One could attribute this to the direct transfer of face-to-face teaching strategies to online platforms without sufficient modification (Saleh & Medway, 2022). Consequently, students may experience boredom and less concentration, ultimately affecting their academic outcomes (S4).

Student 4 (S4):

Not all teachers used motivating activities during online classes. Some of the teachers just display the book and explain without using exciting online activities.

The majority of students preferred on-campus learning, citing better concentration, access to content, and more effective socialization (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S7; S11; S12). However, some students favored online learning for its flexibility and the ability to participate without feeling shy (S6; S8).

Common disadvantages of online learning included technical problems, lack of focus, and a sense of disconnection from peers and instructors (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5). Additionally, some students found online learning less exciting, particularly for beginners who need foundational support (S10). Students (S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12) praised campus learning for its ability to keep them more engaged and focused, citing face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers as a significant advantage. Many students felt more responsible and motivated in a campus setting, particularly during exams (S8; S9; S10; S11; S12). On-campus settings generally saw better participation (S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12), but some students found it easier to participate online without feeling shy (S2; S5). Most students preferred group work on campus (S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11), but one student pointed out that online group work provided better documentation and accountability (S4). Some students viewed on-campus exams as more serious and motivating, reporting better grades in this setting (S6; S11), while others felt they were less exciting and not ideal for beginners (S10; S11).

All participants reported that seeing the teacher physically motivated them more than merely hearing their voices online. This visual presence in face-to-face classes likely enhanced engagement and motivation, further influencing their learning effectiveness and academic performance. While students appreciated the convenience and accessibility afforded by online learning platforms, they consistently noted that face-to-face classes provided a more conducive environment for understanding and comprehension, especially in reading classes. Many students felt that the physical presence of a teacher and the direct interaction with peers in a traditional classroom setting enhanced their ability to grasp complex concepts and engage more deeply with the material. This preference highlights the significant role that the tangible and interactive elements of in-person learning play in fostering academic success, particularly in subjects that require active discussion and immediate feedback to clarify doubts and reinforce learning.

The study revealed that there was no statistically significant disparity in academic performance between online and face-to-face learning methods. This finding supports previous studies conducted by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) and Means et al. (2013), which indicated that online learning can achieve outcomes comparable to those of traditional classroom settings. Both modalities presented comparable information and utilized standardized evaluations, resulting in this equivalence. The interactive tools provided by online platforms, along with the ability to review recorded lectures, helped reduce distractions and fill gaps in knowledge, potentially improving student performance. Nevertheless, online education encountered obstacles such as connectivity problems and lack of formal environments, which, as noted by Singh and Meena (2023) and Forbes et al. (2023), may have impeded some students'

progress. We conducted the research during a sudden shift to online learning, which may have limited potential variations in the results. According to Al-Nuaim (2012), there was no notable difference observed between online and traditional learning environments. The study identified two major themes: student participation and technical concerns. Students expressed challenges in sustaining motivation and managing connectivity issues, which is consistent with the findings of Anderson (2008), Moore (2013), and Hrastinski (2008). According to McBrien, Cheng, and Jones (2009), the difficulty of modifying in-person techniques for online platforms resulted in decreased participation. Although flexibility has its advantages, DiPietro et al. (2008) noted that students still preferred face-to-face interactions for enhanced engagement. The study emphasizes the necessity of customized online instructional approaches to tackle these concerns, as proposed by Bates (2015). To validate these findings and enhance online learning methodologies, it is necessary to conduct additional research using larger and more diverse samples.

Limitations

The present study had some limitations. First, a relatively small sample size limited the study. Consequently, further research involving a larger sample size and varied contexts is required to more comprehensively assess the effectiveness of online learning and its comparability to face-to-face instruction. Secondly, it is crucial to broaden the research scope, given that the current study limited its scope to a single institution with distinct academic policies. To corroborate the inferences of this research and to explore the perspectives and achievements of educators and students, further research involving both public and private universities within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is indispensable. Extending the research to include male participants would provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender-related differences in attitudes toward online learning. Several studies have highlighted distinct variations in how male and female students perceive and engage with virtual education, suggesting that gender may play a role in shaping students' preferences, motivation, and overall experience with online platforms. By incorporating male participants, the study could uncover these potential differences, offering deeper insights and improving the generalizability of the findings.

Conclusion

This study has explored the comparative effectiveness of online and face-to-face learning modalities in the context of EFL Saudi students' reading comprehension courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the first research question, the findings indicate no statistically significant differences between the two modes of learning in terms of academic performance. This suggests that under the conditions studied online learning can achieve similar outcomes to traditional in-person instruction. However, we should interpret these results cautiously and refrain from generalizing beyond the specific context of this study due to the relatively small sample size. The second research question focused on identifying the most significant differences between online and face-to-face learning experiences. Consistent with existing literature, students reported mixed perceptions of online learning. While they appreciated the convenience and flexibility of accessing courses from home, as well as the ability to revisit recorded lectures, they also highlighted significant drawbacks. These included technical issues, such as network connectivity problems, as well as a lack of motivation and peer interaction, which are critical for effective learning, particularly in reading comprehension. We also identified the transfer of face-to-face teaching strategies to online platforms without adequate adaptation as a potential factor contributing to reduced engagement and concentration.

This study has shown that online learning can achieve reading comprehension outcomes comparable to those of traditional face-to-face classrooms. However, students expressed a distinct preference for the in-person learning environment, citing better engagement and understanding due to the direct interaction with instructors and peers. While the pandemic has demonstrated the potential of online learning, we must address several challenges, such as maintaining student motivation and engagement, to enhance its effectiveness. Future research should consider larger and more diverse samples to validate these findings and explore strategies to mitigate the identified drawbacks of online learning. Additionally, the development of tailored online teaching methodologies that exploit the unique advantages of virtual platforms while addressing their limitations could further bridge the gap between online and face-to-face learning experiences. This approach could ensure that online learning not only matches but potentially exceeds the educational impact of traditional classroom settings.

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Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: Education and Student Life				
Textbook: <i>Interactions 2 Reading</i> by Pamela Hartmann and Elaine Kirn				
Chapter 1: Education and Student Life				
Duration: 50 minutes				
Objective: Students will develop reading comprehension skills by breaking down paragraphs, identifying main ideas, understanding contextual vocabulary, and engaging in discussion about education systems across cultures.				
Lesson Stage	Time	Objective	Activity/Procedure	Materials
1. Warm-Up Activity	10 minutes	Activate prior knowledge and set the context for the lesson.	Display the photo on page 3 of the Student Book. Ask guiding questions about the image. Discuss the significance of the Chinese proverb about education.	Student Book Whiteboard/ Markers
2. Chapter Opener Activity	5 minutes	Encourage students to think critically about the differences in education systems.	On the board, write down a sentence starter. Have students discuss in pairs. Share ideas with the class.	Whiteboard/ Markers
3. Reading Activity	20 minutes	Improve reading comprehension through active reading strategies.	Pre-Reading: On the board, write a guiding question. Encourage students to think about the question. Reading: Silent reading or follow along with audio. Underline new words. Identifying the Main Idea: Read the strategy box. Identify the main idea in paragraphs A & F. Compare answers with a partner.	Student Book Audio Player
4. Post-Reading Activities	10 minutes	Enhance understanding of reading structure and vocabulary.	Understanding Reading Structure: Match paragraphs with topics. Discuss answers. Checking Your Vocabulary: Check vocabulary in context. Review answers as a class.	Student Book Whiteboard/ Markers
5. Wrap-Up and Homework Assignment	5 minutes	Consolidate learning and prepare for the next lesson.	Recap main ideas. Assign a short reflective writing task. Inform students about the next class discussion.	Whiteboard/ Markers



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Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Stimulating Student Engagement: A Mixed-Methods Exploration Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory

Abstract

This study sought to investigate how teachers perceive their self-efficacy in fostering three critical dimensions of student engagement: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. The research used the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as a foundation to unravel the intricate interplay between teacher cognitions and student engagement in academic settings. A mixed-methods approach was employed to ensure both breadth and depth of understanding. Quantitative data were gleaned using descriptive statistics, while qualitative insights were extracted from in-depth teacher interviews. Findings revealed that teachers feel most efficacious in catalyzing emotional engagement, with both quantitative scores and qualitative accounts affirming this observation. A palpable connection between emotional and behavioral

engagement was identified, implying that active participation often stems from emotional resonance. Conversely, cognitive engagement emerged as a nuanced challenge, with teachers often grappling to influence it effectively. SCT interpretations underscored the dynamic interplay between individual cognitive processes, observational learning, and the broader educational milieu. The pronounced role of emotional engagement suggests the necessity for tailored teacher development programs. Furthermore, the intricacies of cognitive engagement advocate for more individual-centric curriculum designs. These insights have profound implications for teacher training, curriculum design, policy formulation, and future research, emphasizing the need for creating immersive and holistically engaging learning environments.

Keywords: mixed-methods approach, Social Cognitive Theory, student engagement, teacher self-efficacy

The globalization trend and the growing economic integration of Vietnam into the world market have highlighted the significance of English language proficiency as a crucial tool for communication, trade, and socio-cultural interaction (Doan & Hamid, 2021). Consequently, there has been a surge in demand for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Vietnam. In this scenario, ensuring English teaching and learning is pivotal. An essential factor contributing to the efficacy of the teaching-learning process is learner engagement (Ginting, 2021), a multi-dimensional construct comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Park & Yun, 2018). Teachers play a vital role in mediating and enhancing this engagement (Liu et al., 2023). Thus, exploring EFL teachers' self-efficacy in the context of Vietnamese language centers becomes indispensable, as it sheds light on how teachers perceive their abilities to foster student engagement.

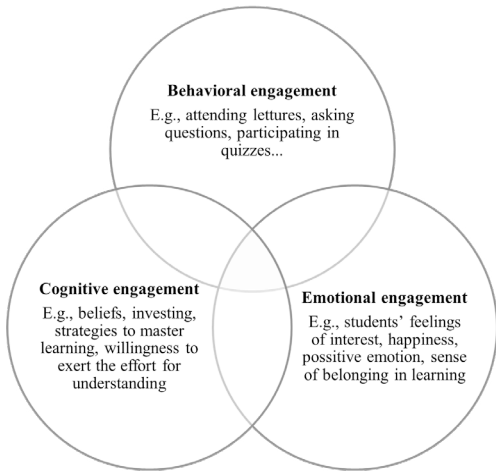
Language centers in Vietnam have proliferated rapidly in recent years. Unlike formal school settings, these centers cater to a diverse range of learners, from young children to adults, with varied learning purposes—be it for academic, business, or leisure purposes (Thao et al., 2023). The settings within language centers can significantly differ from formal schools, presenting unique challenges and dynamics. The teacher-student ratio, infrastructure, teaching aids, and classroom dynamics in these centers might vary considerably. Given these distinct characteristics, the self-efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers working within this context can provide insights that might differ from those teaching in regular schools.

Engagement, a term rooted in 500-year-old English and derived from French, originally denoted a formal agreement (Axelson & Flick, 2011). Its meaning has evolved, now suggesting a state of being wholly present. Despite the growing body of research on student engagement, the term remains controversial (Al-Adeimi & Baumann, 2023). Since the 1990s, student engagement has been a focal point of research, leading to diverse definitions (Zepke et al., 2010). Martinez et al. (2016) viewed engagement as participation and connection with

school activities, while Santi et al. (2022) emphasized that engagement surpasses mere involvement—it embodies feelings and active participation. Engagement has, over time, transitioned from a complex term connoting formal agreement to a more straightforward concept involving presence and, more recently, a blend of action and emotion.

Frameworks to define student engagement vary. For example, Ainley (2006) cited behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. In contrast, Horstmannshof and Zimitat (2007) highlighted behavioral and psychological aspects, emphasizing the time spent studying and the value of learning. Vadenboncoeur (2006) differentiated formal (in-class) and informal (extracurricular) engagement. The framework proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004) closely aligns with Ainley (2006), defining student engagement as behavioral compliance, emotional reactions, and cognitive commitment. Despite varied definitions and frameworks, engagement universally encompasses student participation, cognitive effort, and emotional involvement. This study seeks to explore EFL teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy in student engagement, specifically using the framework by Fredricks et al. (2004) due to its comprehensive detailing. Figure 1 below describes this framework.

Figure 1
Engagement Framework (Fredricks et al., 2004)



Self-efficacy, as conceptualized by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual’s belief in their capability to execute behaviors necessary for producing specific performance attainments. Teacher self-efficacy influences teaching practices, classroom environment, and student outcomes. Previous studies have

emphasized the link between teacher self-efficacy and student engagement. For instance, Thompson et al. (2022) found a direct relationship between teachers' efficacy beliefs and student achievement. Furthermore, previous studies on EFL teaching specifically (e.g., Hussain et al., 2022; Pressley & Ha, 2021), have underscored the unique challenges teachers face, ranging from cultural differences to the intricacies of teaching a language not commonly spoken in everyday contexts. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding understanding this dynamic in the context of Vietnamese language centers.

This mixed-methods study seeks to bridge the identified research gap by investigating Vietnamese EFL teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in enhancing learners' engagement within language centers. The specific objective is to measure the self-efficacy levels of Vietnamese EFL teachers in language centers concerning their ability to engage learners. As a result, the study addresses one research question: "To what extent do Vietnamese EFL teachers perceive their self-efficacy in enhancing learner engagement in English classrooms?" In achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide insights that can guide institutional policies, teacher training modules, and classroom practices to ensure an optimal English learning experience for students in Vietnamese language centers.

Method

As the name suggests, the mixed-methods research approach combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach is adopted to harness the strengths of both methodologies and provide a more comprehensive understanding of research problems (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In the context of this study on Vietnamese EFL teachers' self-efficacy, the mixed-methods approach provides both a broad understanding through numerical data and an in-depth insight via personal narratives and experiences.

The professional development journey of teachers is intricate and multifaceted. Drawing from the model proposed by Coombs et al. (2018), teachers navigate through five stages, evolving from novices to experts. This comprehensive model delineates the professional and personal requirements of teachers as they transition through these stages.

- Stage 1: Novice—This stage is characterized by student teachers and those in their first year of teaching. Novices are more inclined towards practical experiences than mere theoretical information. They begin by grasping foundational terminologies, concepts, school culture norms, and elementary facts about their profession.

- Stage 2: Advanced Beginner—As teachers accrue experience, transitioning into their second and third years, they advance to this stage. The blend of experiential knowledge and theoretical insights starts influencing their teaching methodologies. Despite this progress, these teachers often lack a sense of professional autonomy and frequently seek guidance from senior teachers.
- Stage 3: Competent Level—Teachers, usually in their third to fourth years, achieve this level. Equipped with adequate experience, they start making informed decisions regarding their teaching objectives and strategies. These teachers exercise greater control over their teaching environment.
- Stage 4: Proficient Level—Few teachers in their fifth year ascend to this stage, marked by a pronounced sense of intuition. They holistically discern patterns in teaching and learning scenarios.
- Stage 5: Expert Level—Attained by teachers with six or more years of experience, experts exhibit seamless teaching performance and astute decision-making. Their teaching approach is largely student-centered, contrasting with novices, who are more teacher-centered.

Given the above assertion, these stages were integral to this study’s participant selection. Sixty EFL teachers actively teaching in English centers across Can Tho City were chosen based on this model. The intent was to discern potential variations in self-efficacy and engagement across these professional development stages. Notably, the participant pool had a higher female representation, reflecting the gender distribution in this profession. Table 1 below presents a demographic breakdown of the participants.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants for the Questionnaire (N = 60)

Variables	Sub-variables	Frequency	Percent
Genders	Male	18	30
	Female	42	70
Professional development stages (years of teaching)	Novice: 0–1 year	12	20
	Advanced Beginner: 2–3 years	12	20
	Competent: 3–4 years	12	20
	Proficient: 5 years	12	20
	Expert: > 5 years	12	20

After the questionnaire phase, ten teachers from various professional stages were enlisted for the semi-structured interviews. Table 2 encapsulates the demographic profile of the interviewees.

Table 2
Demographic Information of Participants for the Interviews (N = 10)

Interviewees	Gender	Years of teaching
Interviewee 1	Female	Novice: 0–1 year
Interviewee 2	Male	Novice: 0–1 year
Interviewee 3	Female	Advanced Beginner: 2–3 years
Interviewee 4	Female	Advanced Beginner: 2–3 years
Interviewee 5	Male	Competent: 3–4 years
Interviewee 6	Male	Competent: 3–4 years
Interviewee 7	Male	Proficient: 5 years
Interviewee 8	Female	Proficient: 5 years
Interviewee 9	Female	Expert: > 5 years
Interviewee 10	Male	Expert: > 5 years

The diverse profile of participants, both for the questionnaire and interviews, fortified this study with a spectrum of perspectives, enriching the research outcomes.

Two primary instruments were employed to effectively address the research questions of this study: (1) a questionnaire and (2) a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire aimed to assess participants’ perceptions of their self-efficacy in student engagement. In contrast, the semi-structured interview sought to extract more comprehensive insights regarding teachers’ perceptions of their self-efficacy in student engagement and the learning necessities to enhance it.

Sixty EFL teachers took part in the quantitative data collection phase. The questionnaire, structured with 31 closed-ended queries, was segmented into two parts. The initial segment pertained to participants’ demographic details, including gender and teaching experience, and the second section comprised statements probing teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement. The responses provided insights into teachers’ self-efficacy in student engagement. To investigate teachers’ cognitions of self-efficacy in student engagement, a 5-point Likert scale was used. This scale drew inspiration from Bandura (1977) and Fredricks et al. (2004). Table 3 displays the description of the questionnaire.

Table 3
Questionnaire

Clusters	Items	Number of items
<i>Emotional Engagement</i>		8
Knowledge	1	
Thoughts	2	
Beliefs	3, 4	
Practices	5, 6, 7, 8	

Table 3 continued

Clusters	Items	Number of items
<i>Behavioral Engagement</i>		11
Knowledge	9, 10	
Thoughts	11, 12	
Beliefs	13, 14	
Practices	15, 16, 17, 18, 19	
<i>Cognitive Engagement</i>		12
Knowledge	20, 21	
Thoughts	22, 23	
Beliefs	24, 25, 26	
Practices	27, 28, 29, 30, 31	

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the questionnaire’s reliability. Analyzed in SPSS, the outcomes affirmed the high internal consistency of the two questionnaires, with alphas of 0.84 and 0.92, thus attesting to their reliability.

Husband (2020) emphasized that post-study interviews help crystallize participants’ perceptions. Enlightened by Edwards and Holland (2013), the essence of the semi-structured interview is its flexible yet guided approach. An interview guide, rooted in open-ended questions, ensured interviews adhered to the core issues while allowing space for impromptu, in-depth responses. Based on the questionnaire, some pivotal questions were framed for the semi-structured interview, tailored to obtain the research objective. Some interview questions used in the interviews included:

- Please rate your cognition level of self-efficacy in student engagement on a scale from 1 to 5 in the questionnaire. Explain your rating.
- What dimensions of student engagement are you most confident in? Why?
- What dimension of student engagement are you least confident in? Why?

For the semi-structured interviews, ten out of sixty participants were randomly selected. Interviews were initially conducted in Vietnamese and subsequently translated into English, ensuring accuracy through transcription and rechecks. A pilot interview was administered separately to an advanced beginner and an expert teacher to validate the interview structure. Feedback from this exercise led to the refinement of the interview questions.

Before initiating the study, the researchers contacted head teachers from various English centers in Can Tho City, seeking permission and participant details. Subsequently, the researchers disseminated the Google Form link to the questionnaire to potential participants through emails and Facebook messages. Over a span of three weeks, sixty participants furnished their responses. Ten participants were invited to the semi-structured interviews. These discussions were orchestrated online via Zoom to circumvent logistical hindrances. For the sake of comfort and fluidity, participants were allowed to communicate in Vietnamese. These sessions were meticulously recorded, translated into English,

and transcribed. After that, thematic analysis was performed to examine the qualitative data.

In addressing the multi-faceted nature of the gathered data, the analysis was conducted in quantitative and qualitative procedures. This structured approach ensures that the results align seamlessly with the research objective, and in turn, provide coherent answers to the research question. Data derived from the questionnaires was examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for the quantitative segment. The process involved generating descriptive statistics that essentially summarized the chief aspects of the data. By presenting a visual and straightforward overview, it becomes facile to understand the intricate patterns of the data.

Concerning the qualitative data, responses from the semi-structured interviews underwent a rigorous thematic analysis. This method is noted for its efficiency in pinpointing, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns or “themes” (Braun et al., 2023). The procedure began with an in-depth familiarization phase where the transcribed interview data were perused multiple times. Following this, initial codes were generated by meticulously examining each text portion for recurrent patterns. These initial codes were subsequently grouped based on resemblances and potential patterns, giving rise to potential themes and subthemes. A refining phase ensued that these themes broadly and accurately encapsulated the dataset’s essence. This involved a retrospective glance, matching the themes with the coded excerpts and the entire dataset. After that, each theme was described in depth and named.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was instrumental in explicating the study’s findings. Rooted in the idea that learning transpires in a social context, SCT posits that individuals acquire knowledge through observing others within the ambit of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences (Bandura, 2002). This theoretical lens offered a robust framework to understand how teachers influence and are influenced by their social environment. The observed patterns of student engagement, their perceptions, and responses can be contextualized within the interplay of personal factors, behaviors, and the environment. By anchoring the findings in SCT, the researchers were able to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced explanation for the observed behaviors, attitudes, and feedback from the study’s participants, emphasizing the reciprocal nature of learning and social influence.

Findings

Table 4 presents the quantitative results relating to the EFL teachers’ self-efficacy in the three domains of student engagement: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive.

Table 4
EFL Teachers’ Self-Efficacy in Student Engagement

Teachers’ Self-Efficacy	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Engagement	2.13	4.75	3.89	.49
Behavioral Engagement	2.18	4.73	3.75	.57
Cognitive Engagement	1.83	4.50	3.50	.66
Overall	2.29	4.61	3.69	.54

When considering emotional engagement, the teachers’ self-efficacy appears quite high. The average score stood at 3.89 out of a potential 5, with scores spanning from 2.13 to 4.75. The narrow SD of .49 indicates that most teachers shared similar confidence levels in promoting emotional engagement among students. On the other hand, the domain of behavioral engagement showed a mean score of 3.75, with the results ranging from 2.18 to 4.73. The SD in this domain (SD = .57) was slightly higher than that of emotional engagement, suggesting a broader variation in teachers’ self-beliefs about their capabilities in fostering behavioral engagement. Cognitive engagement presented a distinct scenario. The mean score for this domain was 3.50, which, although reasonably high, was lower than the scores for the other two domains. This domain also had a more extensive range of scores, from 1.83 to 4.50, and the highest SD (SD = .66) of all three domains. These data might suggest that teachers felt less self-assured about their efficacy in promoting cognitive engagement compared to the other areas. The composite assessment of teachers’ self-efficacy across all three domains yielded an average score of 3.69, fluctuating between 2.29 and 4.61. The overall SD of .54 reflects a moderate spread in teachers’ self-efficacy perceptions.

SCT can be applied to explain these findings. This theory accentuates the pivotal role of self-efficacy beliefs in shaping how individuals perceive challenges and their capabilities. It posits that those with high self-efficacy are more inclined to view challenges as tasks to master. Given the high mean scores in the domains of emotional and behavioral engagement, it can be inferred that the majority of EFL teachers believe they are adept at cultivating these types of engagement among their students. This sense of confidence aligns with the tenets of the SCT: Teachers with elevated self-efficacy are likely to establish ambitious goals and

are dedicated to achieving them. However, the slightly diminished self-efficacy evident in the cognitive engagement domain might hint at teachers perceiving this area as more challenging. Their beliefs about their efficacy in this domain might not be as resolute, leading to varied approaches to fostering cognitive engagement. This divergence resonates with the SCT perspective, suggesting that self-belief can significantly influence one's actions and methodologies.

The interviews with the teachers presented an echoing sentiment with the quantitative findings. Teachers overwhelmingly felt more confident in facilitating emotional engagement than cognitive engagement among their students. Teachers consistently reported a high self-efficacy in fostering emotional engagement among students. Many described observing their students as being happy, comfortable, and energetically involved in class activities. For instance, a quote from Interview 1 revealed, "I am most confident in engaging students emotionally. Most of my students feel excited in my class and are always friendly with each other." Such testimonies reinforce that a positive emotional atmosphere is recognizable and integral to student participation. This idea was further substantiated by another teacher in Interview 3, who discussed "[t]he value of inclusive activities and the importance of making all students, irrespective of their academic levels," feel welcomed and involved in the classroom. The emphasis on the creation of a comfortable and invigorating learning atmosphere was highlighted as a crucial strategy by many teachers to enhance student learning. Incorporating the SCT, these findings suggest that by tapping into the observational learning aspect, teachers are shaping a classroom environment where students mirror the enthusiasm and positivity exhibited by their peers. This positive emotional contagion could contribute to heightened emotional and behavioral engagement.

The relationship between emotional engagement and its influence on student behavior emerged as a salient point in the teachers' testimonies. Emotional engagement, characterized by students' positive feelings and comfort within the classroom, seemed to directly translate into active participation and involvement in learning activities. A key insight from Interview 5 serves to exemplify this link. The teacher conveyed the notion that once students are emotionally invested and feel positive energy, it naturally leads them to be more behaviorally active in the classroom. The teacher stated, "I am most confident in the emotional engagement part... When students get positive energy, they will actively participate in class activities." Drawing upon the SCT, this observed connection suggests that students' emotional states can act as catalysts, driving their behaviors within the learning environment. When emotionally positive and invested, students are more likely to be proactive, participate in class activities, and engage with the content and their peers. This emphasizes the integral role of emotional engagement as not just an end in itself but also as a vital precursor to fostering visible and tangible student behaviors in the classroom setting.

While teachers exuded confidence in fostering emotional and, to an extent, behavioral engagement, they acknowledged the intricate challenges associated with cultivating cognitive engagement. This dimension was considered hard to influence within a short duration, as evident from the remark in Interview 5: “Cognitive engagement is the one in which I am not confident.” This was reiterated in subsequent interviews, with many teachers expressing the belief that cognitive engagement is more deeply rooted in individual students’ characteristics and may not manifest as immediately as emotional engagement. The teacher from Interview 7 underscored that “Cognitive engagement not only demands time but also varies based on individual personalities.” Such sentiments were further echoed in Interview 8, “We, teachers, usually emphasize the difficulty in significantly influencing a student’s cognitive engagement, especially if we lack the intrinsic motivation or learning autonomy.” Using the lens of the SCT, cognitive engagement challenges can be understood as interplays between personal cognitive factors and external stimuli. While teachers can introduce stimuli, the individual cognitive processes of students play a pivotal role in determining the extent of their cognitive engagement.

Discussion

Numerous studies have examined the intricacies of student engagement in the current educational landscape, especially from the teacher’s perspective. This study’s results shed light on aspects that align with previous research while highlighting distinctive features that contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

As reported in this study, the elevated self-efficacy of teachers in fostering emotional engagement mirrors the findings of prior studies. Historically, many educational researchers have noted the visible and almost immediate impact of positive emotional atmospheres in classrooms on student participation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018). The active and recognizable nature of emotional engagement makes it a realm where teachers feel more in control. The current findings, particularly the teacher testimonials indicating the recognition of happiness, comfort, and involvement among students, parallel previous observations (Abubakar et al., 2017). However, the unique contribution of this current study is the intricate connection between emotional engagement and the observational learning aspect of the SCT. By understanding how students mirror the enthusiasm of their peers and the role of teachers in fostering this positive contagion, the current study offers a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of emotional engagement.

As the current findings highlight, the trajectory from emotional to behavioral engagement affirms what has been postulated in earlier studies (Engels et al., 2020). The direct consequence of positive emotional states, leading to proactive participation, has been a consistent observation. However, the nuance the current study provides is the emphasis on the importance of emotional engagement as a precursor to observable student behaviors. While previous studies have often treated emotional and behavioral engagements as distinct domains, the current findings underscore the interconnectedness of these dimensions, elaborating on the catalyst role of the former in influencing the latter.

Arguably, the most significant contribution of our study lies in the domain of cognitive engagement. While teachers' reduced confidence in this domain is not entirely unprecedented (Chhetri & Baniya, 2022), the current study delves deeper into the reasons behind this sentiment. Earlier studies have often treated cognitive engagement as a singular entity, while the current findings reveal its multifaceted nature, intricately intertwined with individual student characteristics and learning autonomy. This recognition of the subtle interplay between external teaching strategies and internal student cognitive dynamics offers a fresh perspective, distinguishing this study from previous ones. Additionally, the application of the SCT to explain the challenges of fostering cognitive engagement fills a gap in the literature, emphasizing the balance needed between observational learning and personal cognitive processes.

Overall, while this study resonates with certain aspects of existing literature on student engagement, it also offers novel insights, particularly in the domain of cognitive engagement. By emphasizing the intricate relationships between the various dimensions of engagement and drawing connections with the SCT, the current research provides a rich and detailed contribution to understanding student engagement from the teachers' viewpoint.

Conclusion

At the heart of educational research lies an enduring interest in understanding student engagement and the myriad factors that contribute to it. Central to this study was an exploration into how teachers perceive their ability, or self-efficacy, in stimulating various forms of student engagement. With the SCT as its theoretical anchor, the research delved into teachers' cognitions, focusing on the three dimensions of student engagement: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. To capture a comprehensive understanding, the study employed a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative measures, primarily descriptive statistics, offered a clear-cut numerical representation of teachers' self-efficacy across

the different engagement dimensions. On the other hand, qualitative insights gleaned from in-depth interviews breathed life into these numbers, revealing the experiential and nuanced perspectives of teachers. Together, these methodologies painted a wide and deep picture, effectively capturing the essence of teacher experiences and perceptions.

Several insights emerged from the data. First and foremost, emotional engagement appeared to be where teachers felt most competent and efficacious. Both the quantitative scores and qualitative accounts affirmed this observation. The relationship between emotional and behavioral engagement was also made evident, suggesting that the latter often springs from the former. In stark contrast, cognitive engagement presented itself as the most challenging frontier, characterized by its complexity and the perceived hurdles of time and individual variations. Interpreting these findings through SCT illuminated the intricate interplay between an individual's cognitive processes, observational learning, and the broader educational context in which they are situated.

These findings open up several avenues for practical applications in the educational sphere. First, the pronounced role of emotional engagement underscores the need for targeted professional development programs. Such programs could equip teachers with the tools and techniques to cultivate emotionally resonant classroom environments, which, as the data suggests, could have a ripple effect on behavioral engagement. Additionally, cognitive engagement challenges emphasize the urgency for more individualized, student-focused curriculum approaches. Recognizing and accommodating the varied cognitive inclinations of students could pave the way for deeper, more meaningful engagement. Furthermore, at a macro level, policymakers might contemplate integrating SCT principles into educational guidelines. Such policies, rooted in observational learning and individual cognitive processes, could foster educational environments promoting holistic student engagement. Lastly, the findings unearthed here beckon further exploration, particularly in cognitive engagement. This presents an exciting opportunity for researchers to delve deeper, investigating ways to bridge the evident gap between the challenges and actualities of fostering cognitive engagement.

Due to an imbalanced proportion of male versus female and cross-age groups of participants, no comparison was made of teachers' perceptions regarding gender and professional seniority. This methodological limitation was acknowledged and placed a need for further study, where analysis based on demographic variousness would yield more findings and contributions.

In closing, this study offers a nuanced lens into the multifaceted realm of student engagement, viewed through the prism of teachers' self-efficacy. By pinpointing both strengths and challenges inherent in this domain, the research holds the potential to inform and refine educational strategies and directives,

propelling us toward a future where learning environments are truly engaging and immersive.

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Language Teachers' Well-Being from the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory Perspective: A Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling Approach

Abstract

Language teachers experience many stressors and challenges due to the physical, emotional, and social demands of their work, negatively impacting their well-being and performance. Existing research on language teacher well-being has primarily examined the factors affecting it. However, limited research has focused on how language teachers' well-being changes over time and across long periods. To address this gap, this study investigates the well-being of two English language teachers in Turkey across the span of their careers from a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) perspective, using a comparative case approach based on the PERMA framework, a model of psychological well-being and happiness including five components: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with two English language teachers using retrodictive qualitative modeling (RQM) as the methodology. The data were analysed separately for each teacher and then compared. The analysis revealed several factors affecting the well-being of both teachers across their careers. The main theme that emerged was perseverance, which characterized the experience of both participants. Other common themes included professional development, responsibilities, social interaction, and student improvement. The study identified several factors shaping language teachers' well-being across their careers. The paper concludes with implications for promoting language teachers' well-being with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: language teachers' well-being, comparative case study, retrodictive qualitative modeling, PERMA

Recently, language teacher well-being has gained popularity due to the extensive research on the psychology of language teachers, particularly within the field

of positive psychology (e.g., MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2016; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). This growing interest in teacher well-being can be traced back to a pivotal shift in applied linguistics: the introduction of Positive Psychology (PP), which emerged as a counterbalance to earlier research emphasizing negative emotional factors in language learning (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). As highlighted by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), PP emphasizes the role of positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment) and the imaginative capacity of learners to broaden cognitive and motivational resources, thereby enhancing language acquisition. This shift not only creates new avenues for exploring well-being as a dynamic, facilitative force in language education but also expands its application to teacher psychology. As mentioned in several studies, this is mainly because teachers' well-being can have a strong effect on how much they enjoy their work and how well they can teach their students, which is crucial not only for them but also for learners since it influences learner outcomes and happiness (e.g., Bajorek, Gulliford, & Taskila, 2015; Briner & Dewberry, 2007; Day & Gu, 2010; Gregersen, Mercer, MacIntyre, Talbot, & Banga, 2020; Mercer, 2021; Talbot & Mercer, 2018). A combination of individual, professional, and environmental elements, particularly how we perceive our environment, contributes to our sense of well-being (see Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). According to Jin, Mercer, Babic, and Mairitsch (2021), well-being is not static; it constantly changes over time. However, the current literature on language teacher well-being focuses primarily on the factors that influence well-being (e.g., Babic, Mercer, Mairitsch, Gruber, & Hemphkin, 2022; Derakhshan, Dewaele, & Noughabi, 2022; Greenier, Derakhshan, & Fathi, 2021; Proietti & Dewaele, 2021), with a few exceptions (i.e., Sak & Gurbuz, 2023; Sulis, Mercer, Mairitsch, Babic, & Shin, 2021) providing empirical findings on the short-term dynamic nature of well-being.

While researchers have focused on the factors affecting language teacher well-being, limited research has examined how teacher well-being changes over long periods (i.e., across a career). This lack of research makes it difficult to create effective support systems that meet the needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. One exception to the research on language teachers across their careers is the study by Hiver (2017), which examined the performance, motivation, and well-being of EFL teachers, focusing on how language teachers maintain balance and perform well in difficult and stressful jobs. Furthermore, Sulis, Mercer, Babic, and Mairitsch (2023) provide a comprehensive exploration of language teacher well-being across different career stages. However, they do not delve into the dynamic nature of well-being over time, leaving a gap in the understanding of the longitudinal trajectory of teacher well-being.

To address this gap, this study examines the well-being of two Turkish teachers of English from the beginning of their careers to the present, utilizing the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) framework (Larsen-Freeman

& Cameron, 2008). Exploring the well-being of language teachers can offer insights into the specific challenges and successes language educators experience throughout their careers. This research aims to find the dynamic patterns (i.e., signature dynamics) that affect the teachers' well-being and understand the factors that cause changes at different points in their careers. Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (hereafter RQM) (Dörnyei, 2014) is a means for tracing teachers' signature dynamics that influence their well-being, and the way the actions modify it. RQM reverses the typical approach by focusing on examining the past rather than predicting the future, with the aim of identifying factors that affect well-being. In this study, the RQM is used to understand teacher well-being to help create improved and long-lasting working environments for teachers. This can help teachers to stay longer in their jobs and, in turn, enhance student learning outcomes.

Literature Review

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory and Well-Being

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), which is a relatively new approach to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, is derived from ecology, chaos theory, and complexity theory. It examines how humans learn languages in complex and non-linear ways (Dörnyei, 2014). CDST has been developed to understand complex, dynamic, adaptive, and feedback-sensitive systems (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). According to CDST, language learning occurs through the cooperation of many components working together in unpredictable ways (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). Based on this perspective, continuous changes lie at the center of language development and this change is formed through internal factors, such as motivation, and external factors, such as social and teaching environments (Papi & Hiver, 2020; van Geert, 2008). The concept of time scales is a significant part of CDST and it enables researchers to see the changes in time and understand how these changes affect a student's language development (De Bot, 2015). Systems adapt by responding to their environments and organizing themselves under changing conditions. While self-organization refers to making internal changes, co-adaptation refers to the response given to the feedback received from external sources such as teachers or peers (Hiver, 2015). Context includes cognitive, cultural, physical, and social elements and plays a significant role in CDST because language use and learning are closely related to these factors (King, 2016; Mercer, 2016). CDST

makes it possible to see language learning as a system that constantly changes and is shaped by each student's unique experiences and personal backgrounds.

Utilizing CDST to examine well-being allows researchers to observe that well-being evolves over time and is influenced by personal, social, and environmental factors. Similar to how language learning changes based on feedback and different conditions, teacher well-being can also be adapted and changed depending on the situation, and it is shaped by both internal and external factors over time (Mercer, 2021; Sulis et al., 2021). Regarding well-being research, Deci and Ryan (2002) point out two main views: hedonic and eudemonic. The hedonic viewpoint is about happiness, where well-being means feeling good and avoiding negative feelings (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). This type of well-being is generally measured by Subjective Well-Being (SWB), which is how people judge their thoughts and feelings about their lives (Diener & Scollon, 2014), and it is linked to happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The eudemonic perspective is about having a purpose and meaning in life (Gregersen et al., 2020; Mercer, 2021). In 2011, Martin Seligman brought together both views in the PERMA model. The PERMA model includes five elements: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Like CDST, this model also sees well-being not as the absence of negative experiences; instead, it is viewed as a process shaped by good experiences and conditions (Mercer, Oberdorfer, & Saleem, 2016). Instead of viewing well-being as the opposite of mental health problems, the model focuses on developing social and personal strengths (Mercer et al., 2016). This change focuses on understanding how we can nurture, encourage, and develop our social and personal qualities (Mercer et al., 2016).

Sulis et al. (2023) propose a different perspective on well-being. They believe well-being should be understood by looking at a person's social context, personal differences, and environment. This is similar to CDST, which sees well-being as shaped by external and internal factors that change depending on the person and their social context. Studies have shown that a teacher's personal and work life are interconnected and both sides affect their well-being (e.g., Johari, Yean Tan, & Tjik Zulkarnain, 2018; Mercer, 2021).

More recent conceptualizations of well-being embrace the complex dynamic system and ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Mercer, 2021). Studies based on CDST see well-being as constantly changing and influenced by personal, social, and external factors (Sulis et al., 2021), thus it is a "broad, multifaceted construct" (TOV, 2018, p. 1). By looking at teacher well-being as a dynamic system, it can be understood as a result of ongoing interactions in different social, professional, and personal situations, which are essential for fully understanding language teacher well-being.

PERMA

The PERMA model created by Seligman (2011) describes five important elements that help increase well-being: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. Each component plays a special role in building a satisfying and meaningful life.

1. **Positive Emotions:** Feelings like joy, hope, and gratitude are important for well-being. They help individuals see things more openly and grow intellectually and socially (Fredrickson, 2001; Mercer et al., 2016). These emotions both increase life satisfaction and improve our physical and mental health by supporting positive thinking and behavior (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). In education, encouraging positive emotions in both students and teachers can increase motivation, creativity, and resilience (Helgesen, 2016; Schiffrin, 2014).
2. **Engagement:** Engagement means being fully involved in an activity, often reaching a flow state where time seems to fade away (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This deep focus brings joy and satisfaction. In teaching, engagement happens when teachers put their minds, emotions, and actions into activities, helping them feel connected to their work and more satisfied (Mercer et al., 2016). Engaged people can focus better, stay persistent, and feel more satisfied with life (Ruch, Harzer, Proyer, Park, & Peterson, 2010; Vella-Brodrick, Park, & Peterson, 2009).
3. **Relationships:** Positive relationships are crucial for well-being because they give social support and a feeling of belonging (Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2012). In language teaching, strong relationships between teachers and students build respect and create a positive classroom environment (Mercer et al., 2016). Positive connections with colleagues and students also support teachers' well-being by building a helpful community (Gregersen et al., 2020).
4. **Meaning:** Meaning in life is the feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself, which we often get by helping society or finding a purposeful role (Seligman, 2012; Butler & Kern, 2016). For teachers, meaning often comes from their commitment to teaching and their desire to make a lasting difference in students' lives. Research shows that people who feel their lives have meaning are healthier, stronger, and more satisfied with life (Brassai, Piko, & Steger, 2011; Steger & Shin, 2010).
5. **Accomplishment:** Accomplishment means setting personal goals and achieving them, which makes us feel skilled and like we are making progress (Seligman, 2012). For teachers, accomplishment can make them more confident and reduce the chance of burnout (Butler & Kern, 2016). Reaching goals, staying motivated, and learning new skills is important for feeling successful (Vasalampi, Salmela-Aro, & Nurmi, 2009).

Together, these five elements help people lead balanced lives by focusing not only on their happiness but also on connecting with and helping others (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Seligman, 2011).

The Present Study

Previous studies have explored the short-term dynamics of teacher well-being (e.g., Sak & Gurbuz, 2023; Sulis et al., 2021) or focused on specific career stages, such as late-career teachers (e.g., Babic, Mercer, Mairitsch, Gruber, & Hempkin, 2022). While some have examined factors influencing teacher well-being (e.g., Jin et al., 2021), none have investigated its evolution over an entire career. Understanding these long-term changes is essential for identifying the factors that affect professional satisfaction and sustainability throughout a teacher's career. This study aims to address this gap by using the PERMA model and a CDST framework to explore longitudinal changes in the well-being of two Turkish English teachers over their careers. To explore these longitudinal changes, this study adopts a Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM) approach, which allows for an in-depth examination of the signature dynamics shaping teacher well-being over time. Based on this objective, the author formulated the following research questions:

1. How do the processes and sequences of events in the teachers' careers influence their well-being?
2. What temporal causal mechanisms explain the changes in two teachers' well-being throughout their careers?

Method

Research Design

The author adopted Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (Dörnyei, 2014) to answer the research questions through a comparative case study approach (Dul & Hak, 2008), enabling both a comparison between the cases and an analysis of each participant. Dörnyei (2007) pointed out that a qualitative research methodology can provide flexibility in answering research questions and accordingly offer unexpected answers; however, this is difficult to achieve in a quantitative study. Also, data gathered via qualitative research is valuable

in identifying individuals, settings, and discussions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). According to Mercer (2020), the significance of qualitative research in capturing the distinctive traits and personal subjectivities of well-being is increasingly recognized since well-being involves personal opinions and assessments of life. Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling facilitates the examination of how intricate patterns emerge within systems through self-organizing processes (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2019).

The first step of RQM is to identify the main outcome such as well-being in language teaching and then to trace back to the past (retrodict) in order to understand the factors or connections that led to this result (Hiver, 2017). This approach illustrates how different factors affect well-being over time. It emphasizes the importance of context, time, and multiple causes (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2019). Subsequently, typical cases that show this outcome, such as well-being, are chosen. Data are collected through interviews, questionnaires, and observations to understand behaviors based on the results and see how these results developed over time (Gu, 2023). Finally, the findings are analyzed to explore their broader impact on other systems and offer practical insights (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016).

Using retrodictive qualitative modeling gave the author a look back at past events. Although it is not a long-term study (since data were collected from the two language teachers in two sessions), this method allowed the author to follow how the teachers' well-being changed over time in their careers. The time-related cues obtained during RQM interviews were analyzed through the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) perspective to show how various factors influenced the participants' well-being over time.

Context and Participants

This study was carried out at a state university in Turkey, in the School of Foreign Languages, with two female English teachers, Bella and Emma (pseudonyms), who volunteered to take part. Both teachers are from Turkey, hold master's degrees in English studies, and are Ph.D. candidates, balancing their doctoral studies with full-time teaching jobs.

Bella, in her forties, has over 20 years of teaching experience at different levels of education. She currently teaches English to preparatory students and also coordinates a CEFR level in the department. Emma, in her thirties, has more than ten years of teaching experience and has worked at various state universities in Turkey. She also teaches English to preparatory students. The biodata of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Biodata of Bella and Emma

Attribute	Bella	Emma
Age	In her forties (exact age not specified)	In her thirties (exact age not specified)
Teaching experience	Over 20 years	More than 10 years
Educational background	Bachelor's and Master's degrees in ELT; Ph.D. candidate in ELT	Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English Linguistics; Ph.D. candidate in ELT
Current role	English teacher for preparatory students; CEFR level coordinator	English teacher for preparatory students. No additional roles specified

In this prep school setting, both teachers work with students from different backgrounds, helping them reach specific language skills needed for their future academic studies. Teaching English to preparatory students is challenging because the teachers must address different levels of student ability and meet language requirements for university-level education. Both Bella and Emma mainly use communicative and task-based teaching methods, which focus on improving students' practical language skills. They also benefit from the university's professional development programs, which help them manage the demands of their teaching and studies while maintaining their motivation and well-being in this busy and challenging work environment.

Procedure and Data Collection

RQM is a three-step process that starts with identifying the outcomes to be studied, which in this case is language teachers' well-being. The next step is to choose participants who represent this outcome. The author used Seligman's (2011) PERMA model to explore well-being, focusing on individuals' positive experiences. Accordingly, participants were selected based on the PERMA framework, that is, participants who experienced positive emotions, engaged in meaningful activities, built good relationships, found meaning in their work, and accomplished personal goals. To gather information, the author conducted initial individual and group interviews with four language teachers, focusing on their well-being. After this stage, the author selected two participants who met the criteria for the study, using a purposeful sampling method. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling means choosing cases with lots of useful information to study deeply and help understand important issues better instead of making general conclusions. The author followed a comparative case study

approach (Dul & Hak, 2008), by choosing participants who shared similar characteristics to understand the factors affecting language teachers' well-being.

In this study, RQM assisted the author in tracking how the well-being of the two teachers changed throughout their entire teaching careers. Data was collected through two semi-structured interviews with each participant online via Zoom. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted around one hour each. The audio records were transcribed and immediately deleted after the completion of the transcription. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions guided by the PERMA model and the interview questions guided the participants to go into further detail about how they perceived their well-being as well as any other personal, environmental, or social factors they believed to have influenced their perspective throughout their careers. Consequently, this approach enabled the author to compare and contrast the well-being perceptions of the two participants from the beginning of their careers to the present.

Data Analysis

The data analysis comprises the last phase of RQM. As such, the transcribed data were entered into Atlas.ti software. The initial reading was done by the researcher to get accustomed to the data. The researcher kept memos. In the following stage, the initial coding was done with a Thematic Analysis (TA) approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes were processed and changed until a comprehensive set of themes was established. To enhance the reliability of the coding process, member checking was conducted with the participants. This enabled the researcher to share preliminary findings and gather feedback on the emerging themes. Next, an in-depth analysis of the participants' trajectories was carried out (RQ1). Finally, the comparative analysis was conducted according to individual trajectory and identified themes (RQ2).

Ethics

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and notified that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. All data obtained are kept confidential by the researcher and stored in a safe place with access limited to the researcher. Therefore, every effort has been made to protect the rights and values of each participant.

Results

The main themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data form the basis of the results. Each subsequent subsection begins with the examination of the participants' career trajectories, with a focus on the signature dynamics identified in the study. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the participants' career trajectories, highlighting the factors that contributed to their well-being throughout their careers. According to Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe (2010), comparative case studies aim to find differences, similarities, or patterns among cases, and at the same time, the cases must be similar enough to make comparisons possible.

Bella's Case

Bella began her teaching career in a challenging environment, at a public school that was located in a disadvantageous area with limited access to basic needs such as internet and water. This environment had a negative impact on her view of her profession and her well-being. Facing this hardship, Bella initially struggled with her sense of purpose. She made every effort to overcome those challenges and improve herself. She noted: "Well, as a young teacher I felt that I could fight against the difficulties and make a difference. I tried hard to cope with the difficulties and wanted to improve myself in my field." When asked how overcoming such difficulties made her feel, she mentioned that she felt happy and powerful, which impacted her well-being positively. In addition, she mentioned that she did not build good relationships with her students in the first year of her career and that this was also an issue for her well-being. She said: "As I mentioned before, my relationships were not good in my first year with my students." These challenges made Bella think about leaving her job; however, she decided to overcome them by making an extra effort, which made her stay in the profession. This sequence of events illustrates how early career processes, such as struggles with resources and relationships, shaped her initial well-being trajectory (RQ 1).

She was later transferred to a school closer to the city center where she could develop relationships with her students to promote her well-being. Bella's signature dynamic was her ability to compensate and adapt to challenges, her readiness to work hard, and her ability to build supportive relationships. It was adaptation to changing work environments that made her successful. She changed the way she taught, suited the new school, and developed positive relationships with her students. She was able to adapt and deal with problems in different ways because she was flexible and kept trying. She could deal

with challenges because she thought and did things differently. This routine kept her feeling good even when things became difficult. Her habits helped her stay strong and maintain her job in difficult times. A signature dynamic is a consistent behavior type, which emphasizes how one reacts to various situations. This consistent behavior helps in forming positive mindsets or habits. Bella's perseverance made her feel fulfilled overall. This was a significant moment in her career because it showed her how to deal with challenging situations. She could adapt to new places and her determination helped her grow in difficult times. She worked in different state schools and always found the power to overcome problems. She has insisted on this throughout her career and has always managed to deal with difficulties with determination. Therefore, perseverance was an important part of her well-being. This phase highlights a temporal causal mechanism (perseverance) central to (RQ 2), explaining how her evolving strategies sustained her well-being amid career transitions.

As her career went on, Bella worked hard to grow and improve in her job. After finishing her undergraduate studies, she earned a master's degree in English. She then started working at a state university. Soon after, in addition to teaching, she began working in the testing unit, seeing it as a chance to improve. About this, Bella said: "[...] I have learned a lot of things about assessment which made me feel improved." This highlights how the testing experience contributed to her sense of professional fulfillment and well-being. The dedication of Bella to professional development served as a signature dynamic, contributing to her well-being positively. However, her university responsibilities soon became overwhelming, which negatively affected her well-being. While working in the testing unit at her institution, she expressed feelings of being overworked. For instance, Bella said: "It was a trying duty and took most of my time and of course affected my teaching. I could have limited time for the organization of my classes." For someone who places great importance on her personal development and profession, the extra responsibilities negatively impacted her well-being and left her feeling inadequate. Bella stated during the member check that she learned a lot during her tenure as a member of the testing unit; however, she also felt exhausted and knew she needed to leave, realizing that well-being sometimes requires knowing when to step away from a stressful environment. She had both positive and negative experiences there and her well-being went through ups and downs during this period and after she left. She explained how her heavy workload negatively impacted her overall well-being. After leaving the testing unit, she felt the need to focus on her professional development and soon she was accepted to a Ph.D. program. As professional growth emerged as a signature dynamic for Bella, focusing on her studies contributed positively to her well-being throughout her career. These career sequences illustrate how professional development processes both enhance and challenge her well-being over time (RQ 1). Furthermore, the interaction

of commitment to professional development and workload shows the causal mechanisms that lead to fluctuations in her well-being (RQ 2).

Over the years in her teaching career, Bella found that building good relationships with her students was very important for her well-being. Regarding this matter, Bella said: “I had a great relationship with my students. I was happy where I lived.” Bella also reports that her approach to building relationships with students has changed throughout her career: “[...] my view of my profession and my students has changed a lot. [...] I can say that if you have a balanced and good relationship with the students you are one step ahead.”

In her member check speech, she also stated that building strong relationships enhances the quality of the learning and teaching process, which contributes to her well-being (RQ 2). This emerged as a signature dynamic for Bella. Seeing her students improve and having a part in that development positively improved her well-being and made her happy. Regarding this, Bella said: “I saw what a teacher means for small kids, how a teacher can affect and change them. I was amazed with this relationship.” She added: “As a teacher, the most important satisfaction source for me is seeing my students’ progress in language learning.” Seeing her students’ progress made her feel fulfilled and strengthened her commitment to teaching, as it allowed her to see the difference she was making. These feelings are positively linked to Bella’s well-being. This evolution in relational dynamics shows how relationship-building processes became a sustained source of well-being (RQ 1).

In retrospect, Bella’s career path shows her signature dynamic of adaptive perseverance, professional development, and strong relationships with students. Whether dealing with limited resources, work pressures, or the challenge of building strong relationships with students, she always found ways to overcome problems and improve her well-being. Her commitment to growth, along with the support she built with her students, helped her manage the challenges of her career with strength and happiness.

Emma’s Case

Emma, on the other hand, began her career as an EFL instructor at a university. Although she initially had some doubts about her teaching qualifications because she graduated in English Linguistics rather than English Language Teaching (ELT), she stated that she was very motivated and happy with her work. Emma worked very hard to cope with her initial doubts and put in lots of effort to feel competent and prepared. She was happy even though she earned little money in her first job. Regarding these, she said: “I enjoyed teaching there, but at the same time went on feeling nervous, and studying a lot just to make sure that I was qualified enough.” Emma’s dedication to

self-improvement and her determination to become successful despite low pay motivated her. Although she did not receive a formal ELT education, her perseverance played a significant role in her well-being and motivation to keep going. She shared that this period helped her to feel mentally prepared and confident in her abilities. As she stated, this made her: "[...] work twice hard [...]" Emma's perseverance acted as a signature dynamic, a consistent motivational force that sustained her well-being throughout her career and was a key part of her success (RQ 2). This early phase demonstrated how her initial career processes, such as overcoming doubts through perseverance, shaped her well-being trajectory (RQ 1).

She worked at different state universities and always put in a lot of effort to prepare for her classes. This dedication helped her grow professionally and also made her feel proud and happy, demonstrating how early career processes influenced her well-being (RQ 1). She had to work hard to compensate for her lack of formal training, a challenge that was frequently mentioned throughout the interviews. She was always dedicated to her students, even when things were difficult. When asked about a class that did not work, she said: "I don't remember any of my lessons that didn't work at all because I got prepared well before my lessons." Moreover, she says: "[...] no room for error [...]" This showed how hard she worked to avoid making mistakes in her lessons, which made her feel competent. Thus, her hard work and sense of adequacy contributed to her well-being. As she continued to work harder, she developed professionally, which further contributed to her overall well-being. In this context, she also noted: "I enjoyed helping my students to achieve their goals while improving myself as a novice teacher."

As Emma's career progressed, she found joy in her professional improvement. After completing her undergraduate studies, she earned a master's degree in English. Even when she began working in the demanding testing unit at her institution, she viewed it as an opportunity to advance in the profession. Reflecting on her role in the testing unit, Emma stated: "I always saw it as a way of improving myself (via training, workshops, etc.)." Emma's commitment to continuous learning contributed to her well-being, demonstrating how career progression and job challenges influenced her well-being over time (RQ 1). As she became more experienced and skilled, the quality of her teaching improved, enabling her to create a positive classroom atmosphere where strong relationships developed.

During the member check, when asked how professional growth made her feel, she linked it to a positive impact on her well-being. While her perspective on her profession and the relationships she built with her students contributed to her professional development, finding effective ways to communicate with students became an important part of her career. She added: "Evaluating my professional experiences across my career, my teaching, my view of my

profession and my students has changed a lot.” Even though working as a testing member contributed to Emma’s professional growth, soon it started to become an overwhelming duty, which negatively affected her well-being (RQ2). While working in the testing unit at her institution, she expressed feelings of being overwhelmed. Emma noted: “[...] I felt exhausted because of taking work home all the time.” This sequence of events shows how the demands of the testing unit influenced her well-being (RQ 1). Although she learned a great deal during her time as a member of the testing unit, the workload ultimately led to her decision to leave the unit and focus on her studies. She reports: “I felt the need to focus on my academic development starting with a PhD.” By concentrating on her academic growth, Emma created a positive cycle. This signature dynamic not only reduced her stress but also encouraged her to engage more deeply in her studies. Her drive to improve in her profession directly contributed to her well-being (RQ 2) and continues to do so, as she is currently a Ph.D. student. This may be seen as a step taken from an exhausting situation to a path that will make her happy.

Throughout her career, Emma’s well-being was also affected by the positive relationships she had at school. In particular, her learners played an important role in her well-being. She noted that collaborative, sincere relationships contributed to her happiness and created a productive learning environment (RQ 2). Regarding this matter, Emma stated: “The classrooms where my students and I could work as a team and establish a sincere relationship, always contributed to all of us.” However, later in her career, she states: “I also realized that sometimes it is possible that I cannot create a relationship at that level with some of my students.” As Emma gained more experience, she realized that it was not always possible to connect deeply with every student. In the beginning, she felt disappointed if she could not form strong bonds with them. Over time, she accepted the complexity of interrelationships, recognizing that each student is different, and she learned to adjust her approach to fit their needs. She adds: “At the beginning of my teaching journey, I used to beat myself up if it didn’t happen. However, now I still do what I can, but accept the fact that it is an “interrelationship” because now I’m more aware that each of my students is unique, so are their preferences.” Emma’s experiences show how complex and dynamic the classroom can be. This complexity affected her attitude toward her relationships with her students. Initially, she criticized herself; however, now she acknowledges the complex characteristics of language education. In this way, she can preserve her well-being by not accusing herself of being a bad teacher. In this way, Emma’s evolving approach to relationships showed how career processes influenced her well-being over time (RQ 1).

Over the years, Emma acknowledged that seeing her students improve and having a part in that development positively improved her well-being and made her happy. Regarding this, Emma expressed her enjoyment and stated:

"I enjoyed helping my students to achieve their goals [...]" Her well-being improved even more when she saw her students making progress, which made her feel more purposeful and committed to teaching. Emma said: "I love it when I see my students' improvement as it is nice to see that I can touch their lives." The performance of Emma's students was also influenced by the relationship she cultivated with them.

A review of Emma's career trajectory, her characteristic perseverance, dedication to career development, and building strong relationships with students are apparent. Even though she had doubts about her teaching qualifications and faced a heavy workload during her time at the testing unit, Emma kept focusing on improving her teaching skills and helping her learners. Her perseverance gave her a clear sense of purpose and well-being that continued for a long time (RQ 2). Moreover, her will to keep learning combined with her ability to develop supportive relationships in the classroom has enhanced progress in her career.

A Comparative Analysis of Bella and Emma's Teaching Trajectories

Both Bella and Emma are two inspiring educators who are passionate about their work. Their dedication has helped them overcome many challenges. Bella began her career at a state school situated in a disadvantageous area where resources were limited and had many students with difficult backgrounds. Even though Bella faced many difficulties, she was determined to make a difference. Later, she was assigned to a new school where her determination to create a supportive learning environment helped her learners make good progress. Emma also began her career facing challenges. Even though she had a bachelor's degree in English Linguistics, initially she had not received a formal education in teaching English as a foreign language. She had a low income at the beginning of her career; however, she was happy and worked hard to improve her teaching skills. Her efforts led her to pursue a Master's degree in English Language Education, which advanced her career. Both teachers were motivated to keep improving, which is why they joined workshops, read a lot, and took courses to improve their skills. Also, they focused on building strong relationships with their colleagues. They derived satisfaction from students' progress and the friendships they had made with other teachers. Bella and Emma's stories show the perseverance and dedication teachers put into their work emphasizing how important perseverance is to overcome challenges and find satisfaction in their careers. Factors linked to Bella and Emma's well-being are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparison of Factors Affecting Bella and Emma’s Well-Being

Factor	Bella’s Case	Emma’s Case
Initial challenges	Negative impact: Disadvantaged school environment, limited resources, poor student relationships. Positive adaptation: Perseverance, adaptability, and effort to improve.	Negative impact: Doubts about qualifications (non-ELT background). Positive adaptation: Overcompensation through hard work and self-study.
Professional development	Positive: Pursued master’s, PhD, and testing unit roles for growth. Negative: Overwhelmed by testing unit workload.	Positive: Master’s, PhD, and testing unit roles for advancement. Negative: Testing unit exhaustion led to stress.
Responsibilities	Negative: Testing unit duties reduced class preparation time, causing inadequacy. Adaptation: Left to focus on PhD.	Negative: Testing unit demands led to burnout. Adaptation: Prioritized PhD to reduce stress.
Social relationships	Negative: Struggled early with student relationship. Positive: Evolved into a key well-being factor via balanced relationships.	Positive: Collaborative relationships enhanced well-being. Adaptation: Accepted complexity of student dynamics over time.
Perseverance	Signature dynamic: Flexibility in teaching style, perseverance in changing environments.	Signature dynamic: Perseverance through self-doubt and workload pressures.

The causal mechanisms (RQ2) influencing the two participants’ well-being are shown in Figure 1.

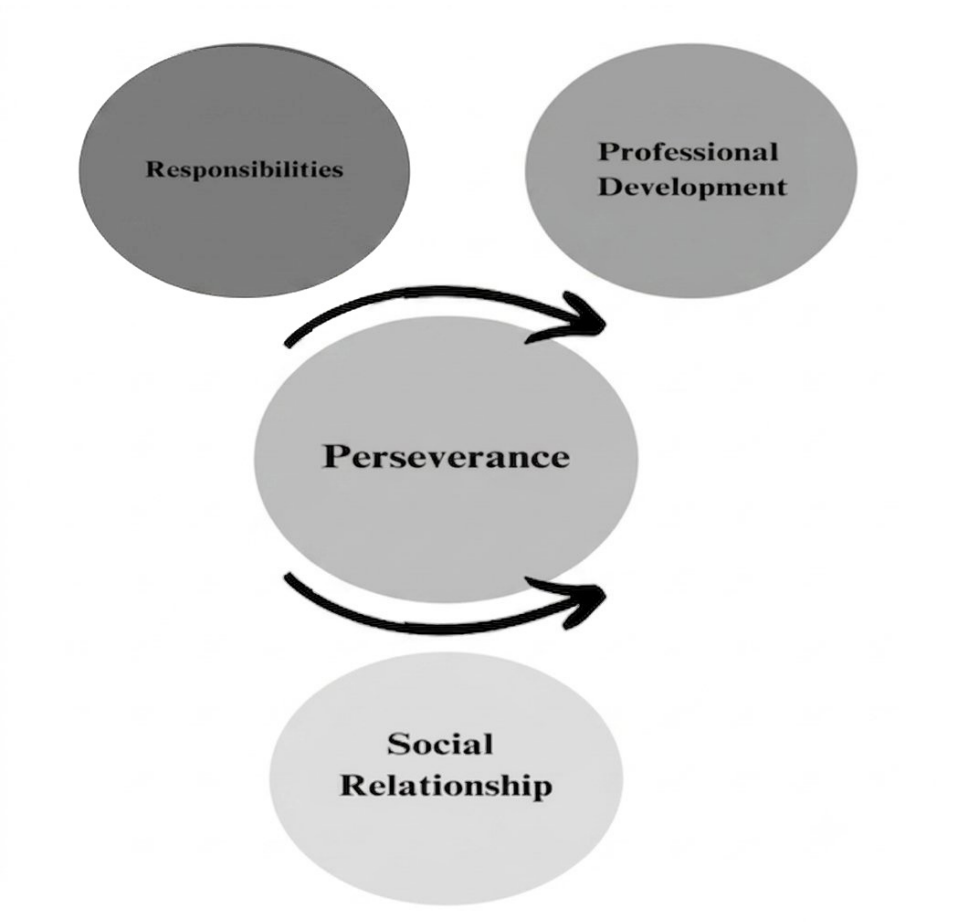
Discussion

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) conceptualizes language teacher well-being as a dynamic state that evolves over time rather than remaining fixed. Well-being is influenced by various factors such as personal, professional, and environmental. According to CDST, it is determined by the way these factors interact and adapt to changing situations (Sulis et al., 2021). Language teachers’ well-being is multifaceted and fluid (Sak & Gurbuz, 2023; Sulis et al., 2021), dependent on the context (Mercer, 2020), and the interplay of numerous factors.

Various factors affecting language teachers’ well-being have been identified by previous research and significant insights have been provided (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2022; Ergün & Dewaele, 2021; Greenier et al., 2021). This study offers new insights about how language teachers’ well-being changes over time and is

consistent with previous research. In this study, the well-being of two Turkish teachers of English was examined to explore the causal mechanisms that influence their well-being and signature dynamics that shape their behavior by analyzing their career trajectories.

Figure 1
The Model of Factors Contributing to Bella and Emma's Well-Being



In this study, the usual, stable behaviors that reflect each teacher's well-being are referred to as "signature dynamics," while the factors causing changes in their well-being over time are referred to as causal mechanisms. The study found that perseverance plays a significant role in shaping teachers' well-being as a key signature dynamic. Both teachers discussed overcoming career challenges without thinking about resignation, which demonstrates their

perseverance during challenging times. This shows the role of perseverance in maintaining their well-being.

According to Hiver (2018), many variables at play may facilitate or prevent instructors from adjusting and recovering when faced with adverse situations, including protective variables that may be connected to one's ability to self-regulate, supporting connections, and environmental features. The results so demonstrate that these professionals gain access to a variety of options to help them overcome challenges in both their personal and professional lives and maintain their careers (Jin et al., 2021).

Regarding the participants' perseverance, Bella showed determination after she had the opportunity to change her workplace. Even though her first job experience was negative, she chose to continue pursuing her job. Bella's perseverance became a signature dynamic of her career, helping her stay focused and stable despite challenges. These specific behaviors assist individuals in adapting to the challenges they encounter. Bella's continued perseverance helped her keep her well-being steady, even when her work environment changed. This consistent pattern in her behavior highlights her perseverance and determination. These qualities play an important role in enhancing her well-being, as they help her deal with difficult situations more effectively.

Emma, on the other hand, worked at a school where she did not earn the money she deserved. However, she was happy with her job because she had great relationships at school. Making little money might have been a negative aspect for her; however, instead of focusing on this challenging circumstance, she continued her career. For Emma, perseverance similarly emerges as a signature dynamic that helped her stay strong and motivated, even when she faced financial difficulties. She was able to keep focused on her job, despite low payment, which shows how her determination helped her maintain a positive attitude by focusing on good relationships and the purpose of her work.

CDST suggests that well-being does not follow a simple, linear path. Instead, it is influenced by different factors at different times, leading to times of growth and stability as well as times of difficulty. Both Bella and Emma experienced this change in their well-being: their well-being improved when they had strong relationships and opportunities to develop professionally; however, they also faced challenges when they had heavy workloads. The perseverant behavior of Bella and Emma helped them survive severe conditions. Their determination shows the "Meaning" component of PERMA, as both teachers find a sense of purpose and satisfaction in overcoming challenges at work.

Also, their ongoing commitment to their job matches the "Achievement" aspect, as they both work hard to improve despite facing difficulties. In line with the perseverance, the commitment participants showed to professional development is a source of increased well-being. This positive view of learning has the potential to be a truly useful psychological ability for teachers to

make use of and gain strength. According to Trejo and Roux (2014), since professional development experiences are the result of teachers' attentiveness, it is more likely that teachers feel fully dedicated to that improvement, and the changes that come from these experiences can last long.

Throughout their careers, both Emma and Bella continued to grow professionally, which served as a signature dynamic for both of them. They completed master's programs, participated in many trainings and workshops, and now they continue as PhD students. Being able to advance in the profession was positively linked with their well-being. Their dedication to professional development shows Engagement, as they take part in learning opportunities that help them grow. Additionally, the sense of achievement they feel fits with the Achievement component of PERMA, increasing their well-being as they reach new goals in education.

While growing professionally, not only did the teachers learn about their jobs, but they also improved the relationships they built with their students. Bella mentioned how she in time managed to find the right balance between herself and her students, which shows how the effect of professional development can be long-lasting. Professional development helped improve the well-being of both teachers. By focusing on growing their skills, Bella and Emma became more confident, which made them more committed to teaching. This shows the idea of reciprocal influences in CDST, where personal growth and well-being affect each other in a continuous cycle.

The analysis also showed that social relationships are significant in enhancing the well-being of the participants. This result is parallel with the literature as it suggests that social interactions are important for language teachers' well-being (e.g., Jin et al., 2021; Mairitsch et al., 2021; Talbot & Mercer, 2018). The relationships Bella and Emma had with their students, colleagues, and admins at their institutions contributed positively to their well-being. This also shows the importance of context in language teacher well-being (Mercer, 2021).

Both teachers expressed that they had great relationships across their careers, which was a source of satisfaction and happiness. Specifically for Emma the strong friendships she built worked as a signature dynamic that helped her feel good about her work. These regular, friendly interactions became very important for her happiness and enhanced her motivation. Her social connections provided a reliable source of joy and support in her professional life. Social relationships played a key role in the teachers' careers, acting as a central and important factor.

For instance, Emma often emphasized that her strong interpersonal relationships contributed to her well-being, especially during difficult times. This shows how social connections can support well-being when facing challenges. The concept of signature dynamics within CDST helps explain how such relationships foster stability and emotional strength, helping individuals maintain

balance in evolving work environments. Furthermore, as Bella and Emma gained professional experience, they developed more effective ways of interacting with others. In this way, the maturation of the teachers positively affected their teaching practice in general.

The strong social bonds Bella and Emma developed with students, colleagues, and administrators show the Positive Relationships component of the PERMA model, which is important for well-being. Additionally, their engagement with students enhanced a sense of Meaning in their work, as they perceived their roles as extending beyond teaching toward a greater purpose.

Regarding student improvement, the data indicated that teachers experienced a sense of accomplishment when observing their students' progress, which was positively linked with their well-being and also consistent with the literature (Shin et al., 2023). Both Emma and Bella derived satisfaction from observing their students' progress and achievements, which contributed positively to their well-being. From their early stages as novice teachers to their current positions as experienced teachers, they felt strong commitment to support their students' success.

At this point, the relationships they built throughout their careers played a significant role and emerged as a signature dynamic. They bonded with their students and put in every effort they could to help them succeed. It was gratifying to see their students succeed due to their dedication, which probably is the best a teacher can feel. Both teachers' satisfaction reflects the Achievement component of PERMA, which resulted in a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, the relationships they built with students enhance the Positive Relationships aspect, creating a supportive and fulfilling teaching environment.

One factor that negatively affected language teachers in the present study was their professional responsibilities. According to the literature, additional responsibilities are said to serve as a heavy workload for language teachers (e.g., Shin et al., 2023; Pourbahram & Sadeghi, 2022), which brings about stress (MacIntyre et al., 2019). This finding is consistent with the data obtained in the present study. For example, Bella and Emma faced an increased workload during their time in the testing unit at their institution. As a result, they had less time to prepare for their lessons and had to take work home, which negatively impacted their well-being.

While multiple sources contributed positively to Bella and Emma's well-being, an increased workload was a threat to them. Particularly, it affects the Positive Emotions component of PERMA by increasing stress and reducing teachers' energy for personal satisfaction. Additionally, it challenges the sense of Meaning in their work, as excessive responsibilities reduce the time for meaningful interactions and impactful teaching moments. Therefore, school administrators must ensure teachers are not overwhelmed by stress, as it can negatively affect their well-being.

Lastly, CDST shows that well-being is affected by the context and environment in which teachers work. Bella and Emma's story illustrate how perseverance, workload, professional development opportunities, and social relationships affected their well-being over time. These findings show that creating a supportive environment for teachers can help improve their well-being and benefit both teachers and students.

Conclusion and Implications

The study aimed to investigate how different factors affected the well-being of two Turkish teachers of English over time and to find out the signature dynamics that support or challenge their well-being. The study emphasized the important role of professional development, perseverance, responsibilities, social relationships, and student progress in teachers' well-being. These changes not only improved teachers' skills but also fostered a sense of accomplishment and engagement, thereby contributing to their well-being. The results showed that offering professional development opportunities is important, as well as that perseverance and experience enhance teachers' well-being. Teachers' hard work and commitment played a significant role in their well-being. Moreover, the relationships they formed created a supportive teaching environment in which teachers felt valued and connected. This, in turn, led to a school culture that supported long-term motivation and resilience among teachers. In addition, seeing their students' achievements added meaning to their work and increased their job satisfaction. However, additional responsibilities threatened their well-being. School authorities should ensure that teachers' responsibilities are manageable so they can balance their personal and work lives. This can help reduce burnout and improve long-term job satisfaction for teachers. By focusing on these factors, school leaders can create an environment in which language teachers can maintain well-being, which will help retain teachers and improve student results.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, it did not focus on the moment-to-moment-changes in language teachers' well-being. These short-term changes could provide important insights into the factors that affect well-being, that is, daily interactions, classroom experiences, or support from school leaders.

Future research could use methods such as real-time data collection, including the idiodynamic method, to track these changes and examine how they affect teachers' long-term well-being. Investigating these changes could provide insights into fluctuations in teachers' well-being. Another limitation was the small sample size, as the study included only two teachers. While in-depth case studies offer useful knowledge, they may not apply to all teachers. Future research could include a larger and more diverse group of language teachers from different regions, school types, and levels of experience to make the findings more widely applicable. Additionally, a cross-cultural study examining teachers from different countries could constitute a valuable avenue for future research. Comparing teacher well-being across diverse cultural contexts would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the global factors influencing well-being and how they vary between cultures. Furthermore, while Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM) is an effective method for collecting retrospective data, it may be prone to biases in recollection, particularly over a long time. Teachers may have a distorted or selective memory of past events, which could influence the results. Future studies could consider combining RQM with other real-time methods, such as teacher journals or regular reflective practices, to provide a more balanced view of teachers' well-being over time.

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Motivation to Learn L2 Pragmatic Features

Abstract

Motivation has been extensively researched in second/foreign language (L2) learning, yet its impact on pragmatics acquisition remains underexplored. This nine-week mixed-methods study aimed to address this gap by examining how motivation to learn L2 pragmatic features fluctuates over time whilst identifying factors that may influence these changes. Thirty-seven Czech secondary school learners of English participated, completing a trait motivation questionnaire before and after instruction. Additional data were collected through follow-up interviews and motometers during lessons on suggestion-making. The findings confirmed the dynamics and multidimensionality of motivation, shaped by individual factors, classroom activities, teaching methods, and the relevance of pragmatic content. Motivation varied significantly within and between lessons, driven by both internal and external stimuli. As learners developed a deeper understanding of pragmatics, their motivation increased, enhancing their ability to use English appropriately. The study concludes with recommendations for L2 teaching practices and future research on motivation in pragmatics learning.

Keywords: second language motivation, motivation dynamics, pragmatics learning, speech acts, suggestions, classroom-based research

Motivation is crucial in second/foreign language (L2) learning, as it significantly influences learners' success and persistence by driving their engagement and effort to master the language (Dörnyei, 2020). Initially, motivation was categorized into integrative and instrumental orientations, with the former focusing on cultural integration and the latter on practical goals like career advancement (Gardner, 1985). Recent research, however, views motivation as a dynamic construct, evolving with various internal and external factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

This contemporary perspective highlights the complex interaction between motivation and context, particularly in L2 classrooms, where motivation can vary even within a single lesson due to learner characteristics, tasks, peer

interactions, and teacher influence (Lamb et al., 2019). Despite its importance, motivation in relation to pragmatics learning—an essential area of L2 competence—has been underexplored.

To address this gap, the current study examined motivation within authentic classroom settings, following recommendations by Al-Hoorie et al. (2021). Unlike previous “snapshot” studies that lack classroom context (Sampson, 2016), this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how learners engage with L2 pragmatic elements—including speech act forms, politeness, and directness—that reflect group behaviors and individual experiences. This approach is particularly relevant to Czech students, whose motivation to learn English has been insufficiently studied.

By applying three key frameworks—Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model, Deci and Ryan’s (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS)—this study offers a nuanced understanding of L2 motivation in pragmatics learning. As we delve into the following sections, these theoretical insights will help frame the discussion of how motivation intertwines with pragmatics, revealing gaps in the literature and highlighting findings from longitudinal studies. This will point toward potential developments in L2 teaching and future research directions.

Literature Review

L2 Motivation Research Approaches

The historical development of L2 motivation theory can be divided into three stages, each enriching our understanding of its complexity and impact on L2 learning (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The “social psychological period” emphasized learner attitudes and motivational dispositions. Gardner’s (1985) integrative motive theory highlighted that shifts in motivation, influenced by factors like sudden interest or external pressures, could alternate between integrative and instrumental orientations. Integrative motivation involves learners’ goals, interest in the language, attitudes toward the L2 community, and the learning environment (Gardner, 2005), mirroring social factors that positively predispose learners toward the L2 group and stimulate their desire to interact with its members. In contrast, instrumental motivation emphasizes the pragmatic benefits of mastering an L2, such as accessing better education or advancing professionally, aligning learning goals with functional, utilitarian purposes.

Gardner’s (1985) model has faced criticism due to its narrow focus. Early critics such as Kruidenier and Clément (1986) argued that motivations like

friendship and personal knowledge often overshadow integrative motives and are closely tied to instrumental orientations. Skehan (1991) also questioned its applicability outside Canada, suggesting that in foreign language contexts, instrumental motives outweigh the influence of integrative motives. Similarly, Dörnyei (2019) noted that the framework overlooks the role of personal identity and global influences in modern L2 motivation (see also Davidson et al., 2016). Recent developments address these limitations by integrating internal aspirations and external stimuli into a more comprehensive understanding of this construct.

The “cognitive-situated period” shifted the focus to the self, identity, and classroom dynamics through Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Attribution Theory. SDT emphasizes intrinsic motivation and psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985) while acknowledging external influences on L2 goals (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Attribution Theory explores how environmental cues, such as ability and effort, shape explanations for behavior and future actions (Weiner, 1992). This approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, provides a deeper insight into how past attributions impact future motivation.

Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), emerging during the “process-oriented period,” expands on theories of possible selves and self-discrepancy. It includes the “ideal L2 self,” a desirable self-image motivating learners, and the “ought-to L2 self,” reflecting perceived expectations to avoid negative outcomes. The “L2 learning experience” addresses situational motives related to immediate learning contexts. The complex dynamic systems perspective further refines the L2MSS by acknowledging the unpredictability and evolving nature of L2 learning (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Dörnyei’s (2014) retrodictive qualitative modeling also emphasizes uncovering motivational factors through retrospective analysis.

Critiques of the L2MSS have raised concerns about its ability to fully capture the complexity of motivation. Despite its prominent role, the model’s emphasis on the ideal and ought-to selves may overly simplify motivational dynamics (Dörnyei, 2009; MacIntyre, 2002). Specifically, it tends to overlook how societal contexts and perceived external pressures shape learners’ self-images and motivations (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). This limitation highlights the need for a more fine-grained understanding of L2 motivation that incorporates these contextual factors, as intimated recently (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Empirical research continues to build on Gardner’s (1985) framework, which remains central to data collection in motivation studies (for a review and meta-analysis, see Gardner, 2019; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Longitudinal studies have shown that motivation stems from integrative orientations and attitudes toward teaching, even if the learning process seems irrelevant (Mendoza & Phung, 2019; Williams et al., 2002). Although motivation may not always

fluctuate significantly, language attitudes can change over time, guided by achievement levels (Gardner et al., 2004).

Research within the L2MSS has extensively demonstrated the dynamics of motivation across cultural contexts and over time (for comprehensive analyses, see Boo et al., 2015; Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). Shoaib and Dörnyei's (2005) retrospective analysis found that recurring themes, like internalizing external goals, often lead to motivational adjustments, though historical data might not fully capture these shifts. Campbell and Storch (2011) observed that motivation fluctuates due to learning environments and personal goals, with the ideal L2 self being a stronger predictor of success compared to the ought-to L2 self (see also Jung et al., 2020). This suggests limitations in the effectiveness of the ought-to L2 self for sustaining motivation.

In different cultural contexts, Taguchi et al. (2009) and Pawlak (2012) identified diverse motivators: promotion-oriented motivation and familial expectations in Asia, and instrumentality and the ideal L2-self in Europe. These studies reveal the adaptability of the L2MSS but also highlight biases and limitations due to brief study durations. Nitta (2013) showed that individual motivation trajectories can vary significantly over time, often reflecting personal challenges or successes. Similarly, Waninge et al. (2014) found that motivation can fluctuate even within a single lesson, influenced by factors such as time of day, task selection, and teacher characteristics. These conclusions emphasize the fluid and context-dependent nature of motivation. More recently, Wong (2018) and Zhou and Papi (2023) illustrated how past successes and the ideal L2 self interactively influence future achievement, while Wu (2024) reported the complex relationship between affective variables like anxiety and the ideal L2 self.

These findings collectively underscore that L2 motivation is a multifaceted and evolving construct, shaped by various individual and contextual elements. Although the L2MSS provides a robust framework, its application needs to consider cultural and individual differences. Longitudinal studies reveal that intrinsic motives play a central role in many contexts, while extrinsic factors become more prominent in cultures with strong social pressures. Despite the valuable insights gained, limitations such as brief study durations and potential biases require careful interpretation. To build a broader understanding of motivational dynamics in language learning, it is essential to integrate these insights with research on L2 pragmatics. This will be discussed in the following section.

Motivation in Second Language Pragmatics

Over recent decades, research has examined how motivational factors impact L2 learning, including aspects like task performance, teaching strategies, and willingness to communicate (for a review, see Lamb et al., 2019). However,

interest in the intersection of motivation and L2 pragmatics has only recently started to gain some traction.

Tajeddin and Moghadam (2012) distinguished between general pragmatic motivation, which involves the desire to use strategies like politeness, and speech-act-specific motivation, focused on mastering particular forms. They found that while learners were motivated in both areas, their pragmatic use was often limited by interference from their mother tongue. Speech-act-specific motivation was a stronger predictor of effective outcomes than general pragmatic motivation, but the cross-sectional design did not address whether motivation changed over time.

Within Gardner's (1985) framework, Khorshidi and Nimchahi (2013) found that integrative motivation can enhance pragmatic development and reduce negative interlanguage transfer, which suggests that teaching should align with learners' specific motivational types. Since limited exposure to authentic language often leads to pragmatic inaccuracies, the authors further recommended increasing students' awareness of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.

Findings from Deci and Ryan's (1985) model highlight intrinsic motivation's role in developing L2 pragmatic competence. Takahashi (2005, 2015) showed that intrinsic motivation fosters an understanding of pragmalinguistics, a finding supported by Tagashira et al. (2011) and Li et al. (2015). These studies noted that learners driven by personal interest use language more effectively. Sanjaya et al. (2023) critiqued the overemphasis on grammar in L2 instruction, while Omrani and Tafazoli (2021) demonstrated that extrinsically motivated learners could excel in pragmatic tasks if rewarded. This underscores the need for instructional strategies that incorporate cultural and contextual language use.

Using Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2MSS, Inagaki (2019) explored how motivation affected pragmatic development in a study-abroad context. The study linked a strong ideal L2 self and self-confidence to successful pragmatic development. Conversely, anxiety from the ought-to self encouraged thorough contextual examination. Yang and Ren (2020) and Yang and Wu (2022) identified the ideal L2 self, intended learning efforts, and attitudes toward the L2 community as key predictors of pragmatic awareness. Building on this, Zhang and Papi (2021) noted that promotion-focused orientations enhance pragmatic outcomes, whereas prevention-focused orientations may hinder them by discouraging interaction opportunities.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in the current literature. Research relies on cross-sectional designs and self-report measures, limiting the ability to track motivational changes over time and introducing biases like social desirability and inaccurate self-assessment (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Studies often overlook the advantages of mixed-methods approaches, which can address the limitations inherent in each method. Moreover, focusing on single motivational frameworks ignores the interplay between motivational types and the role of

contextual factors, such as cultural influences, on pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2015a).

This study aimed to address two of these gaps. First, I examined changes in motivation to learn L2 pragmatic components over time using Gardner's (1985) and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) frameworks. While the L2MSS dominates current research, earlier models remain relevant for explaining motivation, with integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation continuing to be strong predictors of L2 achievement (Gardner, 2019). Second, I employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess whether motivation fluctuates over short and long periods. The study also sought to deepen our understanding of how motivation influences L2 speech act learning, with a focus on Czech students, a relatively underrepresented group in this research area.

Method

Research Question

Based on the theoretical and empirical insights discussed, I sought to answer the following research question: How does motivation influence Czech learners' interest in learning L2 pragmatic features—including speech act forms, politeness conventions, and degrees of directness—over time, and what factors contribute to any potential changes?

Participants

The study sample comprised 37 Czech EFL students aged 16 to 18 years ($M = 17.2$, $SD = 0.66$). All were native Czech speakers, with seven being early bilinguals. English was their first L2, and they were also fluent in one or two additional languages. Participants were divided into three groups: Group 1 ($N = 12$) was in the sixth year of an eight-year secondary program, while Groups 2 ($N = 12$) and 3 ($N = 13$) were in the fifth year of a six-year Czech-Spanish bilingual curriculum. Although Groups 2 and 3 belonged to the same academic year, the school had divided them for L2 lessons to facilitate learning; thus, they were treated as distinct groups in this study. All participants began learning English in primary school and received four hours of instruction per week, demonstrating proficiency as independent or advanced L2 users (see COE, 2018). None had studied English abroad, but 23 had additional English education through language schools or private tutoring.

Trait Motivation Questionnaire

This 49-item questionnaire aimed to profile students' motivation in connection with their interest in learning L2 pragmatics (see Appendix 1). Using a six-point Likert scale, the items were adapted from a rigorously tested questionnaire (Taguchi et al., 2009) to suit the participants' specific context. Following Ryan's (2009) framework, the questionnaire covered four sets of factors. "Attitudinal factors" captured learners' perspectives on the world and their role within it, subdivided into five clusters: integrativeness, instrumentality, attitudes toward the L2 community, cultural interest, and interest in learning pragmatics. The latter cluster, which focused on learners' awareness of communication styles and cultural differences, was developed from pragmatic literature and adhered to Dörnyei and Dewaele's (2023) guidelines on item wording. "Self-related factors" included the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. "Situational factors" explored learners' attitudes toward the learning process, particularly their enjoyment. Lastly, "motivational effects" assessed the effort participants were willing to exert in sustaining their motivation.

Follow-up Interviews

These instruments were designed to complement data from the previous questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Following Campbell and Storch (2011), three interviews were conducted to track changes in motivational factors. This approach aimed to achieve what Dörnyei (2014) calls saturation, where repeating similar questions to learners helps identify key variables influencing L2 learning behavior through consistent responses. Each interview included questions about motivation to learn pragmatics using examples of L1 and L2 pragmatic situations.

Interview 1 focused on trait motivation to establish participants' motivational profiles. It explored their reasons for learning English, their commitment to L2 learning, and any recent changes in L2 motivation. Interview 2, conducted four weeks later, investigated shifts in motivation since the first interview and gauged interest in continuing pragmatic studies after instruction (see below). Interview 3, held one week after the second, reviewed motivational changes since the second interview.

Motometer

A thermometer-shaped figure was designed to measure state motivation during pragmatic instruction. Participants received an eight-motometer set

and drew a horizontal line across the next motometer at 2.5-minute intervals, prompted by a prerecorded bell. Each motometer included a comments section for elaborating on self-reported motivation. Following Waninge et al. (2014), motivation was assessed based on the effort students were willing to exert to learn the material. For a copy of this instrument, see Appendix 3.

Pragmatics Learning Questionnaire

This five-item questionnaire complemented the motometer data by asking students to rate their overall motivation during L2 pragmatic lessons on a six-point Likert scale. Motivation was assessed based on interest, usefulness, relevance, enjoyment, and the desire to expand knowledge. Three additional questions in the initial session determined if participants had prior instruction on the discussed pragmatic topics.

Explicit pragmatic instruction was delivered by the researcher (not the regular teacher) over three lessons in two weeks. The goal was to deepen students' understanding of pragmatic forms and encourage reflection on speech acts. Each session followed a four-step process: raising awareness, presenting pragmatic input, conducting metapragmatic analysis, and performing interactive tasks.

The focus of the instruction was on the speech act of suggestion, addressing its face-threatening nature (Brown & Levinson, 1987) through the regulation of politeness and directness. Pedagogical activities, including individual and interactive listening, reading, and speaking tasks, were designed to target specific pragmatic features. These tasks ranged from analyzing conversations between classmates solving school-related problems to engaging in decision-making tasks and board games, set in real-life contexts like work, school, health, and leisure. Metapragmatic discussions were incorporated throughout, and a summary handout was provided at the end to consolidate learning. For further details on the instruction and tasks, refer to Márquez and de Graaff (2026).

Data Collection Procedures

L2 motivation was examined over nine weeks using a four-phase design. In the first phase (week one), all participants completed the trait motivation questionnaire. To avoid practice effects, three-item sequences were employed. In week two, 18 randomly selected students were individually interviewed by a research assistant. Both the questionnaire and interviews were conducted in Czech to enhance data quality (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023), and the interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and coding.

In the second phase (weeks three and four), three L2 pragmatic lessons were observed. During each 20-minute lesson, students used the motometer and completed the pragmatics learning questionnaire. Lessons were also audio-recorded.

In phases three and four (weeks five and nine), participants underwent two follow-up interviews, with interviewers and interviewees matched as closely as possible to their initial pairings. After the final interview, participants completed the trait motivation questionnaire again.

Data Analysis

SPSS was used for calculating descriptive and inferential statistics. Two-tailed significance tests were applied, with effect sizes derived from the z -value ratio to the square root of N (see Fritz et al., 2012). Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests compared changes in motivation from the start to the end of the study. Asymptotic p -values were reported based on G*Power 3 analysis, which required a minimum sample size of 35 ($\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$), while exact p -values were used for within-lesson motivation analysis due to the smaller sample size.

Internal consistency of the questionnaires was evaluated using intraclass correlation coefficients and Cronbach's alphas for each item cluster (see George & Mallery, 2003). Relationships between motivational factors were analyzed with Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients, following Plonsky and Oswald's (2014) benchmarks.

Interview data were transcribed with fictitious names to protect identities. Dörnyei's (2014) retrodictive qualitative modeling was adapted to identify and categorize prototypical responses, assign motivational variables, and outline key components. Qualitative data from the motometers were analyzed at both group and individual levels, linking self-reported motivation to comments and considering environmental factors like class time and activities.

Results

Trait Motivation in the L2 Classroom

Before analyzing motivational factors for learning L2 pragmatics, the internal consistency of the trait motivation questionnaire was verified. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ($\alpha > .70$) indicated internal consistency for each item cluster at the study's start and end (see Table 1).

Table 1
Internal Validity of Trait Questionnaire Variables—Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

Motivational variable	Study's start	Study's end
Integrativeness	.709	.749
Instrumentality	.740	.809
Attitudes toward the L2 community	.742	.760
Cultural interest	.725	.753
Interest in learning pragmatics	.758	.831
Ideal L2 self	.773	.797
Ought-to L2 self	.780	.746
Attitudes toward learning English	.789	.820
Criterion measures	.826	.824

Participants were motivated throughout the study. Initially, motivation was driven by positive attitudes toward the L2 community ($M = 5.45$), followed by cultural interest ($M = 5.10$) and ideal L2 self ($M = 4.99$). Other factors included criterion measures ($M = 4.95$), instrumentality ($M = 4.93$), ought-to L2 self ($M = .85$), and integrativeness ($M = 4.82$). Attitudes toward learning English ($M = 4.78$) and interest in pragmatics ($M = 4.74$) were also notable. Except for integrativeness, all mean scores increased by the end of the study (see Appendix 4). Significant increases were observed only in ideal L2 self ($z = 2.02, p = .044, r = .337$) and instrumentality ($z = 1.99, p = .046, r = .332$) (see Table 2).

Table 2
Comparisons of Motivational Factors over time ($N = 36$)

Motivational variable	Wilcoxon signed-rank (z)	Effect size (r)	Significance (2-tailed)
Integrativeness	.105	.018	.916
Instrumentality	1.99	.332	.046
Attitudes toward the L2 community	.598	.100	.550
Cultural interest	.772	.129	.471
Interest in learning pragmatics	.574	.096	.566
Ideal L2 self	2.02	.337	.044
Ought-to L2 self	.928	.155	.353
Attitudes toward learning English	1.13	.188	.258
Criterion measures	1.21	.202	.223

Note. One participant did not complete the questionnaire at the study's end.

Interest in learning pragmatics correlated significantly ($p < .001$) with all motivational factors (see Table 3). At the beginning of the study, strong correlations ($r > .70$) were found with ought-to L2 self, attitudes toward the L2 community, and attitudes toward learning English. Moderate correlations ($r > .60$) were observed with cultural interest and instrumentality, and medium ($r > .50$) with integrativeness, ideal L2 self, and criterion measures. By the end of the study,

correlations strengthened ($r > .70$) with attitudes toward learning English, cultural interest, criterion measures, instrumentality, and ideal L2 self. Correlations with integrativeness remained stable but decreased with ought-to L2 self and attitudes toward the L2 community.

Table 3
Correlations between Pragmatics Learning and Other Motivational Factors

Motivational variable	Research phase	Spearman correlation
Integrativeness	Start	.598
	End	.598
Instrumentality	Start	.664
	End	.736
Attitudes toward the L2 community	Start	.717
	End	.597
Cultural interest	Start	.604
	End	.748
Ideal L2 self	Start	.580
	End	.617
Ought-to L2 self	Start	.732
	End	.694
Attitudes toward learning English	Start	.716
	End	.787
Criterion measures	Start	.528
	End	.704

Note. $N = 37$, start; $N = 36$, end.

Two additional correlations are noteworthy. Despite statistical significance ($p < .001$), the relationship between instrumentality and ought-to L2 self remained moderate at the study’s outset ($r(37) = .561$) and conclusion ($r(36) = .533$). In contrast, the correlation between integrativeness and ideal L2 self increased from medium ($r(37) = .540$) to strong ($r(36) = .779$).

At the study’s start, interviewees mentioned six out of nine motivational variables (see Excerpt 1). All saw English as instrumental in achieving goals like studying or working abroad (John). Cultural interest was prevalent, with references to curiosity about other cultures (Jessica), films (16 comments), and books (12 comments). Ought-to L2 self motives (67%) were significant, driven by school requirements (Jessica) or family expectations (Amanda). A few participants acknowledged positive attitudes toward L2 community (6%) and learning English (39%).

Excerpt 1

I study English to understand everything and learn more. You can find more resources in English than in Czech. I also do it to be able to work or study in English-speaking countries, and because it's necessary [to speak English] nowadays. (John)

I study English because it is included in our school timetable. I like it a lot and want to improve in order to speak with people I meet. I'm also into other cultures quite a lot. (Jessica)

Well, I'm expected to learn it. My mom teaches English, so I've been taking classes since forever. In the future, I'd like to study partially abroad and travel a lot. (Amanda)

I learn English because it is internationally recognized. It's a very nice language and I think it will be useful in the future if, for example, I decide to study in an English-speaking country. It will definitely be useful, especially at a higher level of proficiency. (Anna)

Interviews also provided initial insights into criterion measures and motivational changes. Despite prior L2 exposure, only 13 participants (72%) explicitly mentioned their learning effort. Nine (50%) reported no motivation changes over the past year, while others noted increases due to recognizing L2 importance (39%) or experienced decreases as English became easier (11%). The language teacher's influence varied.

At the study's end, participants discussed enjoyable L2 activities and motivational shifts. More than half (56%) enjoyed activities like watching series, reading, and interacting with L2 users, while 44% found school requirements less engaging. Overall, motivation remained stable: 13 participants (72%) continued due to school obligations; three (17%) developed an interest in cultural materials; and two (11%) maintained low motivation, citing sufficient proficiency and a shift to non-language tasks.

Motivation to Learn L2 Pragmatics

The activities related to suggestion-making impacted motivation differently at the group level, with initial motivation being moderate (see Figure 1). Pragmatic awareness-raising talks had minimal effect, listening tasks caused slight interest fluctuations, and reading tasks improved focus. Feedback

sometimes reduced motivation, while metapragmatic discussions and oral interactive tasks, particularly the latter, were most effective in enhancing motivation.

Figure 1

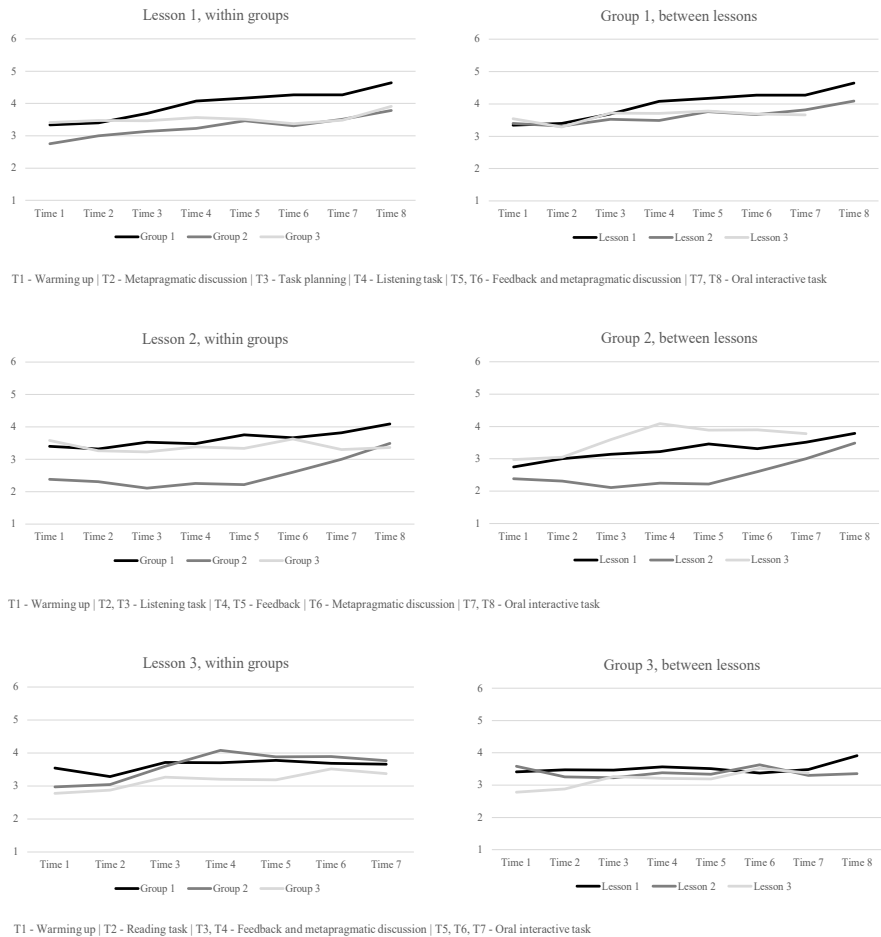
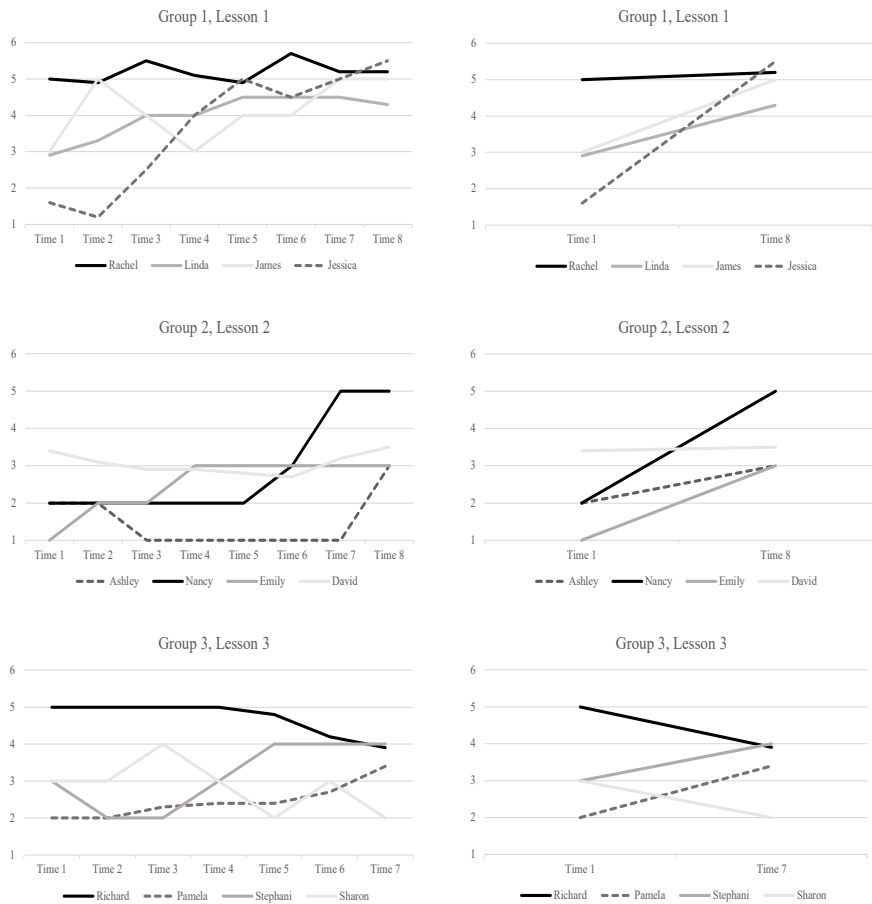


Figure 1 also shows motivational variability between lessons. Group 1 started with low motivation, which gradually increased but then declined in later lessons. Group 2's motivation fluctuated, peaking at moderate levels, with the lowest effort in Lesson 2. Group 3 had stable motivation, though commitment dropped in the final lessons.

Individual trajectories differed from group trends (see Figure 2). In Group 1, Rachel and two other participants were motivated by the topic, while Linda and others improved their engagement over time. James and the other males

were highly motivated by discussions and the instructor’s enthusiasm. Jessica’s interest grew as the lesson progressed.

Figure 2



In Group 2, tiredness in Lesson 2 led to low motivation. Ashley and a peer struggled with the listening task but liked the oral task. Nancy and others valued metapragmatic discussions, increasing their commitment. Emily and four others showed growing interest without significant effort. David and another participant found the listening task challenging but engaging, regaining energy through interaction.

In Group 3, fatigue affected motivation, with only Richard and another student appreciating the closing remarks. Richard found the oral task stressful due to his partner’s lack of seriousness. Pamela and three classmates were sleepy

but found the speaking task somewhat engaging. A competitive student was highly motivated by the oral task. Sharon enjoyed reading but found subsequent activities repetitive and simple.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients confirmed the internal consistency of the pragmatics learning questionnaire across lessons ($\alpha = .803$, Lesson 1; $\alpha = .864$, Lesson 2; $\alpha = .842$, Lesson 3). Motivation increased from Lesson 1 ($M = 4.65$) to Lesson 2 ($M = 4.75$) and further to Lesson 3 ($M = 4.83$). Although short-term increases were not significant ($z = .688$, $p = .507$, $r = .147$, Lesson 1 to Lesson 2; $z = 1.21$, $p = .238$, $r = .247$, Lesson 2 to Lesson 3), the overall increase from Lesson 1 to Lesson 3 was significant ($z = 2.22$, $p = .027$, $r = .523$).

The questionnaire also revealed that students had prior pragmatic exposure at school (100%) and in language schools (31%). Instruction types included explicit (42%), incidental (8%), or mixed (15%), with 35% not specifying approaches.

Follow-up interviews (see Excerpt 2) explored long-term motivation. Most participants (83%) wanted to enhance their pragmatic skills for communicating better (Jennifer), being accurate (Kimberly), and avoiding culture shock (Margaret). Conversely, 17% did not see L2 cultural features as important (e.g., James).

Excerpt 2

I would like to learn some slang and more about formal language. (Jennifer)

I'm definitely interested. It's like when you're searching for a job abroad. You should not talk to your future employer the way you would talk to a friend in a pub. (Kimberly)

When I travel abroad, I always look for them [cultural aspects of the language] so that local people don't think badly of me. I don't want to be disrespectful to other cultures. (Margaret)

I don't care much about, for example, greetings. It usually depends on my mood. (James)

Overall interest in pragmatics increased post-instruction (see Excerpt 3). Most participants (83%) saw its importance for professional growth (Angela), language competence (Anna), and accurate interaction (Elizabeth). Even initially uninterested participants (17%) recognized its relevance, with 78% reading the post-instruction handouts. However, only seven students (39%) found learning pragmatics enjoyable, while 11 (61%) considered it useful but not pleasant.

Excerpt 3

I find it important for my future life, especially my future job. (Angela)

It's important, definitely, because then you sound different, in a more sophisticated way. (Anna)

It's good to learn how to speak with people I know and those who I don't. (Elizabeth)

Participants praised the dynamic instruction, oral interactive tasks, discussion opportunities, and the instructor's enthusiasm, but disliked the listening tasks and preferred shorter interventions. More than half (61%) reported increased awareness of L2 features and eagerness for more information, while some were content with the current input. Only 28% reviewed handouts between interviews.

Discussion

Dynamics of Trait Motivation

This study highlights changes in trait motivation and the complex interplay of motivational factors. Participants' interest in pragmatics was secondary at first. Their motivation stemmed from diverse sources: a desire to interact with L2 speakers, curiosity about L2 culture, self-perceptions of potential proficiency, practical L2 applications, aspirations for L2 goals, openness to the language, and positive learning attitudes. Metapragmatic discussions on speech act realization aimed to enhance communicative performance by shaping participants' perceptions of L2 users and illustrating how greater pragmatic accuracy can improve language use.

A key finding is an increase in the ideal L2 self and instrumentality in connection with an interest in learning pragmatics. This change goes beyond a simple "self-driven" or "goal-oriented" view of motivation, showing a deeper bond between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The rise in instrumentality intimates that learners began to internalize the notion that achieving proficiency in English directly aligns with their aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This shift reflects a broader sociolinguistic environment, where learners saw English not only as a practical requirement but as a path to self-actualization.

This echoes Lamb's (2012) conclusion that learners envision themselves as future English users, linking motivation to the language's relevance for personal and professional identity. Learners were driven not just by enjoyment but by English's instrumental value as a global language. Taguchi et al. (2009) similarly highlight that learners' instrumentality often strengthens as they become more acutely aware of the specific contexts in which English can be beneficial. This heightened awareness is likely influenced by recognizing that mastering pragmatics enhances their competence in various contexts.

Motivation in second language and foreign language contexts may manifest differently. In second language contexts, where learners are immersed in environments where the target language is spoken daily, motivation often arises from immediate, practical needs, and social integration. In contrast, foreign language contexts, such as in Czechia, typically foster more long-term, goal-oriented motivation, driven by aspirations for career advancement, academic achievement, or international communication opportunities.

Given that Czech is primarily spoken within Czechia, it is unsurprising that this encourages the learning of additional languages (see Nekvapil, 2012). English, in particular, is crucial for engaging with the global community, serving as a key tool for communication, accessing information, and creating opportunities worldwide. While relying solely on Czech may limit one's reach, proficiency in English expands horizons. This pragmatic view explains the increased instrumental motivation, as learners recognize their L2 as essential for academic and professional success.

The stability of integrativeness in the study warrants further exploration, particularly considering the participants' sociolinguistic context. Traditionally, integrativeness reflects a desire to integrate into the target language community. However, its consistency here suggests a more fundamental motivational element. For learners from multilingual backgrounds, integrating into an English-speaking culture may be less compelling than for monolingual learners. In this case, integrativeness may signify a broader, more enduring affinity for intercultural communication rather than a specific cultural goal. This idea resonates with Consoli's (2022) "life capital," where linguistic and cultural experiences shape language learning. This acknowledges the intricate blend of memories, emotions, and desires that contribute to an individual's approach to language learning. For Czech learners, English serves more as a tool for international communication than for cultural assimilation.

The shifting correlation between the ought-to L2 self and attitudes toward the L2 community is intriguing. Initially, these variables were strongly linked, reflecting social or familial obligations to learn English. However, by the study's end, this connection weakened, suggesting a shift toward more internalized goals, as discussed in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As learners become more autonomous, their motivation transitions from fulfilling external expectations

to achieving personal growth. This dynamic reflects the evolving personal and contextual factors in L2 learning (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the correlation between ideal L2 self and integrativeness strengthened, reflecting increased interest in learning pragmatics. As learners envision themselves as proficient English speakers, their desire to engage with English-speaking communities grows, which they recognize requires pragmatically accurate language. This is consistent with Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2MSS, where the ideal L2 self drives motivation when tied to identity and aspirations.

Additionally, the growing correlation with cultural interest reflects a nuanced shift in motivation. Unlike integrativeness, cultural interest here is driven by curiosity and intellectual engagement rather than a need for cultural assimilation. Participants expressed interest in engaging with global English-speaking cultures through diverse cultural products. This connects with Sampson's (2016) observations, whereby learners' motivation extends beyond the classroom and taps into broader cultural aspirations, further influenced by life capital (Consoli, 2022).

Self-reported effort and interest in pragmatics increased after instruction on speech acts, highlighting the impact of metapragmatic discussions. These discussions raised awareness of the effort needed to achieve learning goals and their complexity. Effective integration of L2 features requires deep analysis and deliberate practice (Taguchi, 2015b). Learners' dedication to extracurricular activities reflects this effort, which validates Pawlak's (2012) findings that intrinsic motivation strongly drives language learning. Educators can harness this motivation to enhance the L2 learning experience.

Interest in pragmatics also emerged as a multifaceted variable, similar to overall L2 motivation. Learners value L2 community connections, enjoy learning, and are influenced by contextual expectations. Their motivation stems from an appreciation for L2 culture, practical use, and commitment to goals. The study shows that engagement with pragmatics improves when motivations, self-concepts, and attitudes match the desire to enhance pragmatic competence, highlighting the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors for meaningful learning.

Interest in Learning L2 Pragmatics over Time

This study also reveals a dynamic interest in learning L2 pragmatics, influenced by classroom activities and teaching methods. The relationship between learners' interests and other motivational factors shows how task-based instruction affects motivation. Learners perceived the content and delivery methods differently, with metapragmatic discussions and oral interactive tasks being most effective in sustaining or enhancing motivation. This is in line with the cognitive engagement principles of task-based learning (see Robinson, 2011).

Czech learners stay motivated with tasks requiring deeper cognitive processing, like oral discussions, which connect to their broader goals of improving English for international communication.

Other class activities had varying impacts on motivation. Listening tasks led to only minor fluctuations in interest due to their passive nature, which offered fewer opportunities for personal connection or engagement. This is consistent with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) assertion that active participation promotes sustained motivation. Conversely, feedback sometimes decreased motivation because it often points out mistakes, which temporarily dampen enthusiasm. Constructive feedback, therefore, should focus on reinforcing progress toward the L2 selves and encouraging growth (Taguchi, 2015b).

Fluctuations in motivation across lessons stress the impact of contextual factors like classroom environment and task design. Reports of tiredness and varying motivation levels among participants show how external conditions—such as time of day, task complexity, and peer interactions—affect engagement with pragmatics. Al-Hoorie et al. (2021) emphasize that motivation is closely tied to the learning context, making it essential to consider these factors for sustaining motivation. The foreign language context also plays a crucial role in shaping how motivation develops over time, as classroom activities become a key source of language interaction. This highlights the need for instructional methods that establish relevance and simulate real-world communication. Additionally, the competitiveness of some learners and their responses to peers underscore the intricate dynamics of classroom interactions. As Sampson (2016) notes, classrooms are complex systems with individual learners bringing diverse backgrounds, goals, and personalities. This ecological view illustrates that learners are complete individuals, with their emotions, physical presence, memories, and identities all shaping their learning experiences (Consoli, 2024).

The growing interest in pragmatic competence for professional use suggests learners viewed pragmatics as crucial for future English use, aligning with Pawlak's (2012) findings on pragmatic awareness in professional and academic contexts. Learners' desire to master pragmatics to avoid miscommunication underlines its practical importance. However, not all participants found instruction on suggestion-making equally engaging. Some saw it as useful but not particularly interesting, reflecting the challenge of balancing the practical importance of linguistic features with maintaining learner engagement. As Pinner (2016) argues, motivation often depends on the perceived relevance and enjoyment of materials. If tasks do not reflect personal interests or self-concept, the learning experience may feel more like a requirement than an intrinsically motivating activity (Sampson, 2016).

Conclusion

This study explored the dynamic nature of motivation to learn L2 pragmatics features, including speech act forms, politeness conventions, and degrees of directness. It showed that motivation is shaped by a complex interaction of trait variables that can be enhanced through targeted pedagogical interventions. Short-term motivation shifts are linked to specific classroom tasks, while long-term changes depend on pedagogical design and learners' orientations. Task-based learning, which engages both cognitive and emotional faculties, is crucial for shaping and increasing motivation.

To improve motivation to learn L2 pragmatics, several classroom strategies can be employed. Implementing short, varied activities that relate to real-world situations can help engage learners and mitigate disinterest. A thorough needs analysis is essential for tailoring tasks that challenge students, build confidence, and support both individual and group goals. Aligning activities with learners' interests enhances intrinsic motivation while linking tasks to personal goals boosts extrinsic motivation. Effective, bidirectional feedback is also vital; teachers should monitor progress and encourage learners to share their experiences. Building strong, kind, and respectful student-teacher relationships facilitates this dialogue, which is a major driver of motivation.

Tools like motometers can provide ongoing feedback on student engagement, helping instructors adjust tasks to meet learners' needs. Teachers must remain adaptable to changing classroom dynamics, as motivation is influenced by various factors such as L2 experiences and interest, while issues like boredom or fatigue can diminish it. Recognizing individual differences in motivation is also important. Dörnyei's (2014) retrodictive qualitative modeling could help identify learner types and motivation patterns through observation, categorization, and interviews.

Limitations of this study include a small sample size, specific participant backgrounds, and a focus on particular L2 pragmatic features, all of which impact the generalizability of the findings. However, the results are still valuable for similar educational contexts and student populations. The observational nature of the research constrains the ability to assess the direct impact of motivation on pragmatics learning, suggesting a need for further experimental studies (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021). Additionally, reliance on self-reports introduces subjectivity, as students may over- or underestimate their efforts. While self-assessment can offer useful insights (Pinner, 2016), external factors, such as a desire to please the researcher, may affect accuracy.

Future research should explore the link between task engagement (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021) and pragmatic learning outcomes to identify tasks that effectively sustain motivation. It is also important to assess whether existing L2

motivation frameworks adequately address the nuances of pragmatics learning or if a new construct, such as pragmatic motivation, is needed. Additionally, employing a “small-lens” approach (Ushioda, 2016) to collect qualitative, context-sensitive data could provide deeper insights into the complexities of L2 motivation for learning pragmatics. Consoli’s (2022) concept of life capital may offer valuable perspectives on how learners’ backgrounds influence their engagement, leading to more tailored instructional strategies.

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Sample Items from the Trait Motivation Questionnaire

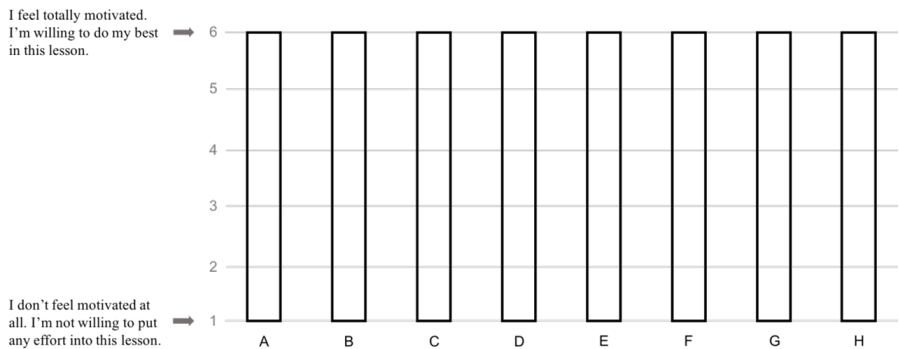
Component	Motivational variable	Sample item
Attitudinal factors	Integrativeness	Learning English is important in order to learn more about the culture and art of its speakers. I like the English language.
	Instrumentality	English ability would help me get a better paying job. Studying English will help me get into better schools.
	Attitudes toward the L2 community	I would like to know more about people from English-speaking countries. I like meeting people from English-speaking countries.
	Cultural interest	I like TV programs from English-speaking countries. I like the music of English-speaking countries (e.g., pop music).
	Interest in learning pragmatics	I would like to understand how cultural differences affect the way of speaking English. It is important to adapt the way I speak English according to the context (e.g., at school, at home).
Self-related factors	Ideal L2 self	I often imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English. If my dreams come true, I will use English effectively in the future.
	Ought-to L2 self	Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
Situational factors	Attitudes toward learning English	Learning English is really great. I always look forward to my English classes.
Effects of motivation	Criterion measures	If English were not taught in school, I would try to go to English classes somewhere else. I am the kind of person who makes great efforts to learn English.

Sample Guiding Questions for Follow-up Interviews

1. Why do you study English? (Example prompts: If mandatory at school, would you be into taking English classes somewhere else? Why or why not?)
2. The desire to do things may change over time. For example, you may be into reading a book today but not tomorrow, right? Compared to last year, do you feel your desire or, let's say, motivation, to learn English has changed? (Example prompts: Why do you think this is so?)
3. When you learn a foreign language, you can read books or watch films or even chat with native speakers of that language to improve your level. What do you do to improve your English skills? (Example prompts: How often do you do that? / Why do you do that (activity)? / If only doing mandatory school assignments, why don't you do other activities?)
4. At times, people vary the way they speak according to the person they speak with. When you speak in English with your teacher, for example, are you more formal with him/her than when you speak with your friends? (Example prompts: Why do you do that? / How do you know you are doing it, maybe you can give me some examples? / If not, would you do it if speaking, let's say, with Queen Elizabeth or the Prime Minister of England? / Why or why not?)
5. Cultural conventions are very important here in Czech Republic: let's say, formal greetings like *dobré ráno* [good morning] versus less formal ones like *ahoj* [hi] or the fact that women are the ones who offer men the opportunity to use *ty* [informal you] rather than *vy* [formal you]. Are these cultural conventions important for you when you communicate in English? (Example prompts: Why or why not? / Do you try to learn these cultural conventions in English? Why or why not? If so, how do you do it? / Do you think these cultural conventions help you speak English better? Why or why not?)

Motometer

Considering how much **effort** you want to put into learning the material right now, please rate your motivation by drawing a horizontal line in the corresponding motometer.



Please write a brief comment (even a word if you want) about each motometer:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____

Trait Motivational Factors over Time

Variable	Research phase	Mean	95% confidence interval of mean		SD
			Lower bound	Upper bound	
Integrativeness	Start	4.82	4.58	5.07	.726
	End	4.81	4.48	4.99	.756
Instrumentality	Start	4.93	4.72	5.12	.604
	End	5.05	4.84	5.25	.601
Attitudes toward the L2 community	Start	5.45	5.29	5.65	.532
	End	5.49	5.39	5.70	.466
Cultural interest	Start	5.10	4.99	5.34	.527
	End	5.15	5.00	5.40	.588
Interest in learning pragmatics	Start	4.74	4.60	5.02	.637
	End	4.75	4.50	4.98	.715
Ideal L2 self	Start	4.99	4.89	5.25	.546
	End	5.13	5.00	5.36	.543
Ought-to L2 self	Start	4.85	4.72	5.16	.659
	End	4.91	4.69	5.12	.639
Attitudes toward learning English	Start	4.78	4.56	5.03	.699
	End	4.89	4.70	5.23	.787
Criterion measures	Start	4.95	4.71	5.18	.712
	End	5.01	4.78	5.24	.689

Note. One participant did not complete the questionnaire at the study's end; *N* = 37, start; *N* = 36, end.



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Disentangling English Language Motivation: A Study of Motivational Factors and the Interplay with Mindsets in Chilean Secondary Students

Abstract

Research underscores the crucial role of motivation in language learning, emphasizing the connection between growth mindsets—belief in the power of effort to enhance ability—and motivation. This study addresses the need for an updated understanding of English language motivation among Chilean secondary school students, as recent studies on this topic have been lacking since 2011 and 2013. Furthermore, the correlation between language mindsets and language learning motivation in this specific context remains unexplored. The study investigates these aspects among 86 Chilean secondary students, employing a mixed-methods approach using the Language Mindset Inventory, the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) questionnaire, and diary entries. Through this comprehensive approach, the research reveals nuanced motivations, underlining the importance of the ideal L2 self and English learning experiences in shaping motivation, challenging traditional views on the significance of the ought-to L2 self. Quantitative analysis establishes a statistically significant association between language mindsets and L2 motivation. This finding supports the argument that learners with a growth mindset are more inclined to envision a positive ideal L2 self, driven by their belief in improvement and readiness to overcome obstacles in their language learning journey. The study suggests aligning the national curriculum with student aspirations and interests. Additionally, it underscores the significance of cultivating growth-oriented language mindsets in educational settings, with educators playing a pivotal role in inspiring students to approach language acquisition with enthusiasm, dedication, and perseverance.

Keywords: language learning, growth language mindset, L2 motivation, L2MSS, secondary students

In Chile, economic aspirations have long fueled the vision of a bilingual nation. Despite mandating English lessons from the 5th grade onwards, standardized test results consistently reflect a persistent gap in English proficiency among Chilean students. This gap underscores the need to explore the factors influencing language learning. Motivation has been widely acknowledged as a key determinant in language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011); however, the specific drivers motivating Chilean secondary students to pursue English learning remain incompletely understood. Although previous research on student motivation in Chile, such as Kormos and Kiddle (2013) and Kormos et al. (2011), made significant contributions over a decade ago, there is a growing need for updated research that reflects contemporary educational contexts and challenges. Chile's unique geographic isolation from English-speaking countries, combined with socioeconomic disparities and a predominantly monolingual Spanish-speaking population, creates a distinct context where English is seen more as an economic asset than a daily necessity. This makes motivation a particularly complex and essential factor in language acquisition.

Moreover, understanding the relationship between language mindsets and motivation in Chilean students is especially critical in light of these developments. Mindsets—the beliefs about one's ability to learn and improve—are associated with learners' motivation and engagement (Dweck, 2017; Lou & Noels, 2016). However, no studies have yet explored the connection between language mindsets and L2 motivation in the Chilean context. Chilean students face distinct challenges, including limited interaction with native English speakers and an educational system that struggles with effective English teaching and learning, which may influence both their motivation and mindset toward language learning. This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the relationship between language mindsets and L2 motivation among Chilean students, marking the first time these constructs have been studied together in this context.

Specifically, the study has two primary objectives: first, to identify the key factors that motivate Chilean students to learn English, and second, to explore the relationship between language mindsets and L2 motivation. The outcomes of this research are expected to inform educational policies and classroom practices, providing valuable insights for educators and policymakers striving to enhance English language learning in Chile's unique sociocultural and economic landscape. By delving into students' motivations and the role of mindsets, this study aims to offer practical recommendations for fostering greater enthusiasm and commitment to English language learning in Chile.

Literature Review

Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation, crucial in language acquisition, influences decision-making and effort persistence, and is characterized as a multi-dimensional, dynamic phenomenon shaped by cognitive and affective factors, influenced by individual and contextual elements (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The evolution of motivation theories in language learning, rooted initially in social and psychological dimensions with integrative and instrumental orientations (Gardner, 1985), transitioned to cognitive theories in the early 1990s, incorporating goal-setting and self-determination theories (SDT; Locke & Latham, 1994; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) underscores the foreign language's integral role in identity, framing motivation as part of self-realization (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). The L2MSS comprises three primary self-guides: the ideal L2 self (desired language proficiency), the ought-to L2 self (perceived responsibilities as a language learner), and the L2 learning experience (shaped by interactions and past experiences with the target language). In this model, self-concept is central to learners' motivation, propelling efforts to align their current self-concept with ideal and ought-to-be selves (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).

The L2MSS is useful to investigate motivation in English as a foreign language (EFL) environment with limited interaction with native speakers as the ideal L2 self envisions future fluency. This research employs the L2MSS to analyze students' L2 motivation, aligning with global meta-analyses demonstrating its effectiveness in capturing key motivational factors (e.g., Al-Hoorie, 2018; Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022).

In Chile, five studies have explored language learning motivation using various components of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) questionnaire, revealing different motivators across age groups. Kormos et al. (2011) found that both L2 learning attitude and the ideal L2 self were significant motivators for learners of all ages, while the ought-to L2 self was especially relevant for university students and young adults. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) further demonstrated that the ideal L2 self was a strong motivating factor for secondary students, with social class exerting a moderate influence on motivation levels. Sato and Lara (2019) reported higher pre-intervention scores for the ideal L2 self and Learning Experiences compared to the ought-to L2 self in their experiment aimed at enhancing motivation among university EFL learners through communicative tasks. Véliz-Campos et al. (2020) found that, for university students, the L2 Learning Experience was the most prominent factor ($M = 3.12$), followed by the ideal L2 self ($M = 2.97$), with the ought-to L2 self receiving the lowest rating ($M = 2.07$). Finally, Inostroza et al. (2024) studied young learners and

found that students exhibited higher levels of parent-oriented motivation ($Md = 4.33$) and attitudes toward learning English ($Md = 3.50$), while the lowest score was recorded for the Ideal L2 self ($Md = 3.00$). Teachers' profiles and students' gender were identified as factors influencing motivation to learn English.

The findings from these studies highlight the importance of various motivators, including the ideal L2 self and L2 Learning Experience, in language learning across different age groups in Chile. Al-Hoorie (2018) and Kormos et al. (2011) have pointed out that the ought-to L2 self may not consistently enhance learners' motivation. Motivation is dynamic in nature and is influenced by contemporary factors such as increased opportunities to study, travel, and work abroad due to visa facilitation programs, as well as Chile's involvement in international trade agreements and partnerships with English-speaking countries. In light of these influences, it is crucial to investigate the impact of the ideal L2 self, English learning experiences, and the ought-to L2 self on Chilean secondary students' motivation in the 21st century. This need for updated insights is particularly pressing, as the most recent study on this topic involving secondary students in Chile was conducted over a decade ago (Kormos et al., 2011), underscoring how contemporary factors may shape motivation in today's educational landscape. Secondary students are at a critical stage where their academic and career aspirations are formed, making it essential to understand how language motivation interacts with these ambitions, particularly given the increasing importance of English in higher education and professional domains. While previous research highlighted the role of the ideal L2 self and L2 Learning Experiences, it remains to be seen how these motivators have evolved in light of Chile's growing integration into global networks and increasing access to international opportunities.

Mindsets and Motivation in Language Learning

Mindsets have been classified as fixed or growth perspectives, reflecting individuals' beliefs about the adaptability of their language learning abilities. A growth language mindset involves the belief that language learning abilities can be developed and improved through effort; on the other hand, a fixed language mindset reflects the belief that language proficiency is an inherent, relatively static trait (Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Studies indicate that language mindsets are domain-specific, with different mindsets for various language skill domains, such as writing and pronunciation (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Mercer, 2011). Empirical evidence supports this domain-specificity, with studies identifying distinct mindsets related to L2 reading (Khajavy et al., 2022).

Language mindsets significantly influence responses to challenges, shaping reactions in language learning situations (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Lou &

Noels, 2017). Growth mindsets lead individuals to view difficulties as opportunities for learning, maintaining a positive mood, while fixed mindsets tend to avoid challenges, fostering negative emotions (Lou & Noels, 2017). In educational contexts, mindsets extend their influence to motivation, with learners possessing growth mindsets demonstrating higher motivation to enhance competence through effort, while those with fixed mindsets seek to affirm existing competence due to the belief in immutable intelligence (Dweck, 2017; Lou & Noels, 2020). Understanding mindsets becomes integral in promoting learners' growth and shaping educational practices (Lou & Noels, 2019, 2020).

Research across various domains, including language learning, consistently emphasizes the significant relationship between mindsets and motivational aspects. Blackwell et al. (2007) discovered a positive correlation between a growth mindset and various motivational factors, such as effort beliefs, learning goals, low helpless attributions, and positive strategies among junior high school students, focusing on mathematics. Jennings and Cuevas (2021) demonstrated a substantial association between seventh-grade students' growth mindsets and increased motivation in the USA, within the domain of social studies. Moving to the language learning field, Cacali (2019) found a notable correlation between mindsets and L2 motivation among Japanese university participants. Additionally, Waller and Papi (2017) examined the connection between growth mindsets about writing intelligence and writing motivation in learners.

To deepen understanding within language learning, Lou and Noels (2016, 2017) highlighted the impact of language mindsets on goal orientation and responses to failure in language learners. A recent multilevel meta-analysis of language mindsets and outcomes in second language acquisition (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2024) found that believing in one's ability to learn and improve leads to higher motivation, better academic results, and greater resilience. Additionally, a study in the Chilean context (Tapia Castillo, 2025) showed that fostering a growth mindset in language learning can boost motivation.

Lou and Noels (2020) introduced the Language-Mindset Meaning System (LMMS), emphasizing the consistent link between language mindsets, motivational beliefs, and self-regulatory processes. Their proposed Mindset-Goal-Response Model illustrates how mindsets predict effort beliefs and goal orientation, indirectly influencing emotional and behavioral responses to failure. The call for further exploration by Lou and Noels (2020) encourages studying additional components of LMMS, employing longitudinal methods, and investigating links between mindsets and the L2MSS and SDT. Building on this call, and given that no studies in Chile have examined the relationship between language mindsets and L2 motivation, this research will delve into mindsets and motivation utilizing the L2MSS questionnaire.

English Language Influence in Chile: Economic Motivations and Bilingual Aspirations

Chile, where Spanish is spoken by 95.9% of the population (Instituto Cervantes, 2021), has placed a significant emphasis on English language learning due to economic considerations (Glas, 2008). This emphasis aligns with the country's commitment to strengthening economic ties, participating in global affairs, and expanding trade connections (International Trade Administration, 2022). English proficiency is particularly crucial in industries like mineral production, especially copper, which plays a pivotal role in Chile's international trade (Icef Monitor, 2016). The government envisions a bilingual Chile, with English as the primary second language, to integrate more effectively with the global economy (Icef Monitor, 2016). Despite these efforts, achieving bilingualism in Chilean society remains challenging (Barahona, 2016a).

Chilean schools, whether public or private, follow the national curriculum, mandating English education from 5th to 12th grade since 1998, involving three weekly hours, totaling 144 hours annually (Curriculum Nacional, n.d.). The 2024 curriculum focuses on advancing students' English communication skills and emphasizes the broader benefits of language learning for cognitive development, cultural understanding, technological literacy, and global awareness (Curriculum Nacional, n.d.). Despite these efforts, the majority of 11th-grade students, evaluated in 2010, 2012, and 2014, still fell below the A1 level, indicating persistent challenges in English proficiency (Ministerio de Educación, 2010; Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2012, 2015). A 2017 national English study further confirmed these issues, revealing low scores across socioeconomic groups and only three out of ten students achieving expected basic learning in 8th grade (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2018).

Challenges in English language education in Chile are influenced by potentially ineffective teaching methodologies and unsuccessful adaptation to the Chilean context by EFL teachers (Philominraj et al., 2021). The shortage of EFL teachers, the low prestige of the teaching profession, excessive workloads, large classes, poor infrastructure, and limited investment have collectively contributed to Chile's subpar results in English language proficiency (Arellano & Hatoss, 2023).

The Present Study

This study acknowledges the prevalent low English proficiency among Chilean students and recognizes the pivotal roles of L2 motivation and language mindsets in language learning. The research aims to contribute significantly to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the Chilean

context, where economic motivations and bilingual aspirations drive English language education.

The research aims to address two key questions: (1) What factors motivate Chilean secondary students to learn English? and (2) To what extent is students' English language motivation related to their language mindsets? By doing so, it seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions and pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing English language motivation, which, in turn, may improve language proficiency in Chilean secondary students. Additionally, the study will investigate the intricate connections between language mindsets and motivation, seeking to contribute valuable insights for the development of effective educational policies and practices in Chilean secondary schools.

Methodology

Context

This study is part of a broader project aimed at fostering growth mindsets and motivation among Chilean secondary students learning English. Due to constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-, post-, and delayed post-test approach, along with qualitative data. Pre-experimental designs are used in situations where it is difficult to implement a classical experimental design, which includes a control group and random assignment (Neuman, 2014).

For the purposes of this article, only part of the broader study is presented. Specifically, this study focuses on the data collected during the pre-test phase, examining the relationship between students' language mindsets and their motivation to learn English. To identify the factors motivating Chilean secondary students, answers to Diary Entry Question (DEQ) number 2 and data from the L2MSS pre-questionnaire will be analyzed. Additionally, to investigate the relationship between students' English language motivation and their language mindsets, data collected from the pre-questionnaires of the Language Mindset (LM) and L2MSS questionnaires will be utilized.

The study took place across eight schools in four regions of Chile (Santiago, Valparaíso, La Serena, and Rancagua), with students representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The curriculum in all schools followed the national guidelines, focusing on English as a foreign language.

Participants

A total of 86 participants, comprising 50 females and 36 males, took part in the study. These students came from low, lower-middle, and middle socioeconomic groups, all facing challenges in English language performance. School socioeconomic levels were determined based on factors such as socioeconomic status, academic performance, dropout rates, and parents' education and household income. Of the 86 participants, 42 were enrolled in public schools, while 44 attended subsidized private schools, which receive government assistance to cover a portion of students' expenses, with the remainder being paid by parents, foundations, or institutions. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years old ($M = 15.73$, $SD = .938$) and were enrolled in grades 9 to 12. Ethical approval was obtained from University of Essex and parental consent was secured for the participation of secondary school students.

Instruments

Questionnaires

The study employed two main questionnaires to assess key variables: the LM and the L2MSS. The LM questionnaire, adapted from Lou and Noels (see Appendix A in Lou & Noels, 2017), comprised three dimensions: General language intelligence beliefs (GLB; e.g., "to be honest, you can't really change your language intelligence"), L2-aptitude beliefs (L2B; e.g., "you can always change your foreign language ability"), and age-sensitivity beliefs about language learning (ASB; e.g., "people can't really learn a new language well after they reach adulthood"), with each subscale containing six items. Utilizing items from previous studies (e.g., Papi, 2010; Ryan, 2009), the L2MSS questionnaire assessed levels of L2 motivation. It comprised components such as ideal L2 self (e.g., "if my dreams come true, I will use English effectively in the future"), ought-to L2 self (e.g., "if I fail to learn English, I'll be letting other people down"), and English learning experience (ELE; e.g., "I really enjoy learning English"), with each consisting of six items. This survey is suitable for examining L2 motivation in environments where English is promoted as a global lingua franca (Dörnyei, 2009). The questionnaires incorporated a neutral response option within the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to accommodate uncertainty or a lack of a definitive opinion.

The development and validation of the research instruments involved a meticulous process to ensure reliability and validity. The questionnaires were carefully translated, drawing on the researcher's expertise with Chilean adolescents and fluency in both English and Spanish. According to Dörnyei and Csizér (2012),

translating questionnaires into participants' native language is common practice, as it improves data quality. This approach has been used in other L2MSS studies (e.g., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009). The LMI questionnaire was originally developed and validated by Lou and Noels (2017), and the L2MSS questionnaire incorporated items from validated studies on language learning motivation (e.g., Papi, 2010; Ryan, 2009). A linguistic expert with experience as an English language teacher in Chile reviewed the translations for accuracy and contextual relevance, refining the language for clarity. Following Dörnyei's (2003) suggestion, a pilot test was conducted with ten students from the same age group and school types as the study participants to ensure the questions were clear and relevant. Participants provided feedback, and revisions were made to address unclear terms, improving the clarity and ease of use. For instance, "sustancialmente" (substantially) was replaced with "en gran medida" (to a large extent). Finally, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the instruments.

Diary Entry Questions

DEQ were incorporated into this study to complement the information gathered through the L2MSS questionnaire and to enhance the validity of the data through cross-validation. DEQs allowed participants to reflect on what aspects of learning English they enjoyed, allowing for the gathering of intricate and individualized details. Given that while piloting the DEQs, most students did not fully understand the questions in English, participants were given the option to read and answer the questions in either English or Spanish. For this study, answers to DEQ 2: "What do you like about learning English?" were examined.

Data Collection Procedures

Participant recruitment occurred from December 2019 to March 2020 through email and social media outreach to headteachers and English teachers in Chile. The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to data collection, affecting school responses and limiting student participation due to insufficient online connectivity and technology resources. It is crucial to note that student involvement was voluntary, requiring internet access and an electronic device for questionnaire completion and participation in online sessions.

The data for this study was collected in April 2020, during which 86 students completed the pre-questionnaire, consisting of the L2MSS and LM questionnaires. Of these 86 students, 38 responded to the DEQ. The qualitative data from the 38 participants who answered the diary entry questions

provided insights into their motivation to learn English, which were compared with the data from the L2MSS pre-questionnaire. Additionally, data from the 86 pre-questionnaires were used for the quantitative analysis of the relationship between students' language mindsets and motivation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Before the main analysis, the internal consistency of the instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis. Internal consistencies were assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, following Hinton et al. (2014) guidelines, which categorize reliability as excellent ($\alpha \geq .90$), high ($.70 \leq \alpha < .90$), or moderate ($.50 \leq \alpha < .70$). The LM questionnaire revealed high to moderate reliability ($\alpha = .84$ for LM overall, $\alpha = .75$ for GLB, $\alpha = .57$ for L2B, and $\alpha = .72$ for ASB). The L2MSS questionnaire demonstrated strong reliability across all subscales ($\alpha = .79$ for L2MSS overall, $\alpha = .92$ for ideal L2, $\alpha = .92$ for ought-to L2, and $\alpha = .92$ for ELE).

Following this evaluation, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between students' language mindsets and English language motivation. Correlation strengths were interpreted based on Cohen et al. (2018), with modest correlations ranging from .20 to .35, and moderate correlations nearing .50.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative dataset using NVivo 12 to identify patterns and themes related to the students' motivations for learning English. Responses to DEQ 2, "What do you like about learning English?," were coded using Saldaña's (2021) coding cycles. Themes were developed through repeated coding and identification of patterns. A second coder was involved in cross-checking the coding process to ensure consistency and reliability. The quotes from participants were translated from Spanish into English and cross-verified by another researcher for accuracy. Additionally, pseudonyms were applied to protect the anonymity of the students.

Results

The findings are presented in alignment with the two research questions. The results are organized into thematic and quantitative analyses, corresponding to the qualitative data collected from students’ DEQ responses and the quantitative data from the L2MSS and LM questionnaires. Each theme is supported by examples and excerpts from participants, while the quantitative findings are summarized through correlation coefficients, a relevant figure and tables.

Motivational Factors for Learning English

Before diving into the thematic analysis, it is important to note a marked difference in motivational themes across the participants’ responses, as reflected in both the qualitative diary entries and the quantitative L2MSS questionnaire. While the ideal L2 self and ELE were the two dominant motivational themes in the qualitative analysis, the ought-to L2 self played a relatively minor role.

In the qualitative responses, the ideal L2 self and ELE generated approximately 100 excerpts each, underscoring their significance in students’ motivations. In contrast, only two quotes addressed the ought-to L2 self, reflecting a minimal influence of external obligations, such as pressure from parents or peers, in motivating these learners. This aligns with the quantitative results from the L2MSS pre-questionnaire. As seen in Table 1, participants do not perceive studying English as an obligation to please others. Instead, they learn English to fulfill their personal goals.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 self and ELE

	N	Mean	SD
Ideal L2 Mean	86	4.4247	0.75
Ought-to L2 Mean	86	1.9049	1.00
ELE Mean	86	4.355	0.83
Valid N (listwise)	86		

The thematic analysis of students’ qualitative responses is categorized under two main themes: the ideal L2 self and ELE. These themes are further divided into specific codes (e.g., Code 1, Code 2), which represent distinct motivational factors identified in the data. Each code is linked to specific items in the L2MSS questionnaire, referenced as 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, etc., which correspond to individual questionnaire items that measure aspects of the ideal L2 self and ELE.

Theme 1: The Ideal L2 Self Drives Students' Motivation to Learn English

The ideal L2 self emerged as a significant motivator for students learning English, with Code 1 emphasizing the language's role in providing hope for better future opportunities. The excerpts in this theme closely align with all the ideal L2 self items: 4.1 (If my dreams come true, I will use English effectively in the future), 4.2 (I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues), 4.3 (Whenever I think of my future, I imagine myself being able to use English), 4.4 (I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English), 4.5 (I can imagine myself writing English e-mails/letters fluently), and 4.6 (I can imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals) in the L2MSS questionnaire.

Code 1: English as Providing Hope for Better Future Opportunities, Such as Travel, Study, and Work. The most prevalent code, with seventy-six excerpts, centered around students' enthusiasm for learning English in relation to future opportunities such as travel, study, and work in an English-speaking environment. Thirty-seven participants referred to these future opportunities. These excerpts align with the more general statements 4.1 and 4.3 and closely align with items 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5 from the ideal L2 self in the L2MSS questionnaire.

For example, Paula mentioned that learning this language would help her to have a better life:

[...] And the most important thing is that it can help me in the future, like get ahead as a person and make my life better. It would be boring to know English and stay in my own country or not be able to travel or do something because my dream is to study or live in another country to make my life there, and if I know English, of course, I wanna use it. [original words]

Code 2: English as a Means of Building Multicultural Communication in the Future. The second most prevalent reason for learning English, related to the ideal L2 self, is to foster multicultural communication. This code bears resemblance to items 4.2 and 4.6 from the ideal L2 self in the L2MSS questionnaire. Fourteen participants articulated this idea, and a total of twenty extracts were identified. For instance, Mark explained: "I like learning English because I can communicate with more and more people, to know their story and share it with the world" [original words].

Code 3: English Improvement for Future Entertainment Purposes.

While not a perfect match, this code is somewhat related to items 4.1, 4.2, and 4.5 in the L2MSS questionnaire. Even though these items are not specifically related to learning English for entertainment purposes, 4.1 and 4.2 encompass broader dreams and goals, while 4.5 focuses on the idea of English improvement. Eight students expressed their desire to understand and sing favorite songs, watch movies without Spanish subtitles, appreciate authentic voices in English, and read books in the target language. This sentiment is reflected in Amelia's response who articulated:

What I like most about learning English is that if I keep doing it, in the future, I will be able to see series, anime, and movies without subtitles. Sometimes, an anime or movie is only translated into English and not Spanish, like some books that just come out and are only in English. I say, "I do not understand much English; I'll just wait 2 years for them to be translated into Spanish," and I'm a big fan of reading. I feel bad when I can't read a book when they just released it because it's only in English [...]. The other aspect is being able to sing in English without invoking any demon, and most importantly, because I like and love English; it is a very great language. I would like to learn it and teach it to my children if I have them.

Theme 2: English Learning Experiences Drive Students' Motivation to Learn English

Ninety-seven extracts were associated with this theme, making it one of the most popular and the most diverse themes, with six different codes assigned. Some codes were intricately linked to items in the L2MSS questionnaire, particularly items 6.1 (Learning English is really great) and 6.4 (I find learning English really interesting). While the L2MSS questionnaire items conveyed general ideas (i.e., great, interesting), the diary entry responses provided more detailed insights into why students cherished their English learning experiences, underscoring the richness of the qualitative data.

Code 1: Realizing English Language Improvement. The most salient code pertained to students' awareness of language development. Twenty-seven students, expressed their affinity for learning English due to its positive impact on their language proficiency and comprehension. For instance, Amelia conveyed her satisfaction with the continuous improvement in her language skills, enabling a better understanding of the English language across various media:

What I appreciate about learning English is that I understand. It's not just about knowing 100 words, but every day, I comprehend more and more. I also like it because I understand songs, series, and books in English more effectively.

Code 2: English is a Beautiful Language. Moreover, fifteen students acknowledged their enjoyment of learning English because they perceived it as a beautiful language. When articulating the allure of this language, many students cited aspects such as pronunciation. Additionally, some students highlighted their ability to express themselves more effectively in English, noting that the language allowed them to convey their sentiments more appropriately. For instance, Lucas expressed:

I like to talk. More than anything, I like the sound, the pronunciation. I like the way it allows me to express myself. It's like a stronger feeling. It's deep. I can express my feelings easier in English than in Spanish. I don't know why but I like it so much. [original words]¹

Code 3: English is a Useful International Language.² Eleven students expressed their appreciation for English, citing its usefulness as a key factor. Laura emphasized the practicality of English, noting its widespread use globally:

[...] it is very practical since it is one of the most well-known and spoken languages. Additionally, it is one of the most used languages in various settings, particularly in places characterized by multiculturalism or in tourist areas, even in countries where English is not the official language.

Code 4: I Like the Challenge of Learning English. Furthermore, five participants articulated that they appreciated English primarily because of the challenges it posed. This theme emerged in ten extracts. For instance, Gabriel echoed this sentiment, expressing the satisfaction derived from witnessing his English improvement when grappling with complex tasks: "I like it because it is something challenging that, at the time of testing it, like when trying to read something in English and understand it, leaves an immense feeling of satisfaction and happiness."

Code 5: Communicating with Others in English. Eight students expressed their affinity for learning English as a means of communication. For instance,

¹ Typos in this extract were amended to facilitate the comprehension of the participants' words.

² This code is related to students' English learning experiences, similar to finding English interesting or useful, and differs from the personal aspirations in Theme 1.

Alexander remarked that he appreciated English because it enabled him to connect with individuals from other countries for gaming: “I like English because I enjoy playing and interacting with people from other countries through English, making it easier to understand and play.”

Code 6: Varied Methods to Learn English. Five students noted their appreciation for learning English due to the diverse methods available. For instance, Carlos explained: “I like to see that, as in the Spanish language, there are different ‘alternatives’ to learn, for example: listening to it, reading it, trying to talk about it, also watching videos.” Similarly, Mateo emphasized: “But I think what I like most about learning English is that it is a pursuit that entertains you. Regardless of the subject, you can learn English in such varied ways that there are no limits.”

The Relationship Between Language Mindset and L2 Motivation

The second inquiry aimed to ascertain the correlation between students’ language mindsets and their motivation to learn English. Following Dörnyei’s (2007) guidance, Spearman’s rho, a non-parametric test, was employed to assess the correlation between non-normally distributed LM questionnaire (Shapiro-Wilk, $p < 0.05$) and normally distributed L2MSS questionnaire (Shapiro-Wilk, $p > 0.05$). There was a statistically significant correlation between the two variables, $r(86) = .36$, $p = .001$, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Correlation Between Students’ Language Mindsets and L2 Motivation

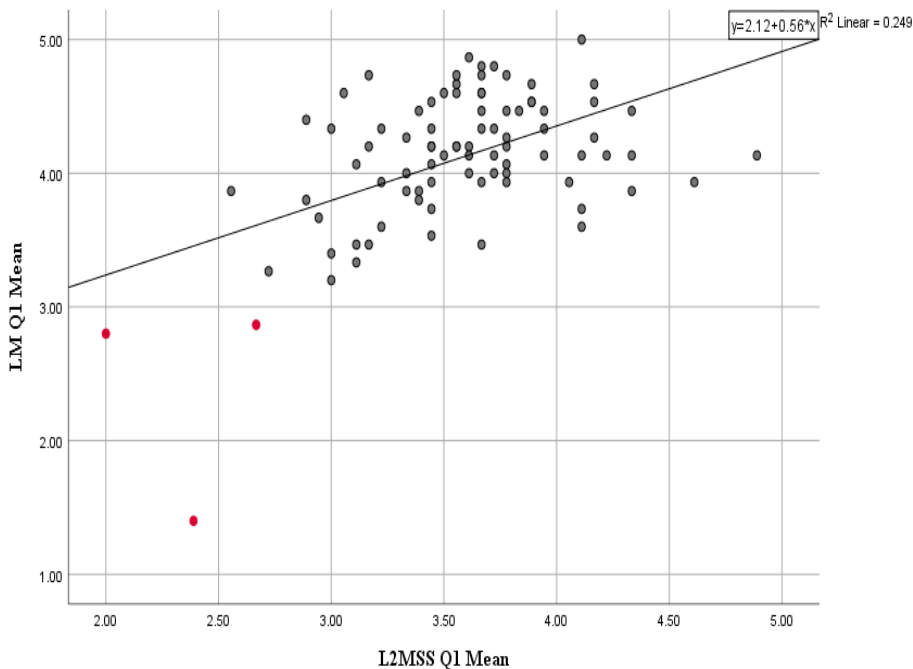
		LM Q	L2MSS Q
Spearman's rho	LM Q	1	
	L2MSS Q	.364**	1

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

A scatterplot summarizes the results (Figure 1). The scatterplot illustrates that students with lower mindset scores (between 1 and 3), indicating a more fixed mindset, generally exhibit lower motivation (between 2 and 3 points). For students with the highest mindset scores (between 4 and 5), their motivation varies, ranging between 3 and 5 points. Notably, there are no instances of students with low mindset scores and high motivation to learn English.

Figure 1

Scatterplot of Students' Language Mindsets and L2 Motivation



In a more comprehensive analysis, correlations between students' language mindsets and L2MSS sub-scales were examined using Spearman's rho correlation coefficients. All three correlations were found to be statistically significant. A positive correlation was observed between language mindsets and ideal L2 self, $r(86) = .42, p < .001$, and between language mindsets and ELE, $r(86) = .53, p < .001$. However, a negative correlation existed between mindsets and ought-to L2 self, $r(86) = -.28, p = .013$.

Language mindsets demonstrated a weak correlation with general L2 motivation and a moderate correlation with the ideal L2 self and ELE. Additionally, a weak negative relationship was observed between language mindset and the motivational sub-scale related to ought-to L2 self. Language mindsets exhibited stronger correlations with specific aspects of motivation in the L2MSS questionnaire than with the entire questionnaire (see Table 3).

Table 3
Correlation Between Students’ Language Mindsets and L2 Motivation Sub-scales

		LM Q	Ideal L2	Ought to L2	ELE
Spearman's rho	LM Q	1			
	Ideal L2	.418**	1		
	Ought to L2	–.267*	–0.038	1	
	ELE	.526**	.565**	–.217*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Notably, no statistically significant differences in language mindsets or motivation were found between genders, proficiency levels, or types of school ($p > 0.05$) in the analysis. This suggests that the observed relationships between language mindsets and motivation are consistent across these different groups.

Discussion

Motivational Drivers in Chilean Secondary Students’ English Learning

The Central Role of the Ideal L2 Self

The ideal L2 self, representing the learners’ envisioned future self as proficient English users, emerged as the most significant motivator. This aligns with Kormos et al. (2011) and Kormos and Kiddle (2013), who found that the ideal L2 self was a strong motivator for Chilean secondary students and other age groups. The influence of the ideal L2 self reflects students’ aspirations for future academic, professional, and personal opportunities where English proficiency is seen as an asset. This is particularly relevant in the Chilean context, where English is increasingly associated with economic opportunities and global integration (Glas, 2008; Icef Monitor, 2016).

However, as Dörnyei (2009) emphasized, it is crucial to consider the internalization of external influences on the development of the ideal L2 self. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) highlighted that self-perceptions, including the ideal L2 self, are socially grounded and may be shaped by significant others,

such as parents, teachers, or peers. This raises the question of whether the students in this study genuinely possess these aspirations as their own or if they have unconsciously adopted the viewpoints of their significant others. The strong presence of the ideal L2 self among Chilean secondary students could indicate that they have internalized these external influences, perceiving them as personal goals. This phenomenon suggests that the ideal L2 self may not purely reflect the learners' independent aspirations but rather a socially influenced construct that aligns with the expectations of their social environment.

While previous studies have highlighted the role of social class in shaping the ideal L2 self, the current findings suggest that this influence may be less pronounced. Kormos and Kiddle (2013) observed that social class had a moderate impact on motivation levels, with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrating stronger ideal L2 selves. In contrast, the current study found that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds also exhibited high levels of ideal L2 self, indicating a potential shift in motivational dynamics. This shift may be influenced by increased access to global opportunities and a growing recognition of English as a tool for social mobility in Chile. Interestingly, these students displayed levels of ideal L2 self similar to those previously observed in higher socioeconomic groups, suggesting that aspirations have become more positive and aligned across different social strata over the past decade. However, as participants in this study volunteered, they may have had higher motivation levels than their peers; thus, further research is needed to confirm this trend.

Positive ELE

The positive role of ELE in motivating students is consistent with the findings of Kormos et al. (2011), who identified L2 learning attitude as a key motivator for secondary students, university students, and young adults. Véliz-Campos (2020) also found ELE to be the most prominent motivational factor for university students. Similarly, Sato and Lara (2019) reported that university students had higher pre-intervention scores for ELE compared to the ought-to L2 self. In the current study, secondary students expressed enjoyment and satisfaction with their English learning experiences, which were associated with their progress and engagement in class activities. This indicates that fostering positive learning experiences is essential for motivating Chilean students, particularly in a context where current teaching methodologies have been criticized for being ineffective and inadequately adapted to the local context (Philominraj et al., 2021). A more contextually relevant curriculum could help address these challenges and enhance students' motivation.

Minimal Influence of the Ought-to L2 Self

The study found that the ought-to L2 self had a minimal role in students' motivation, consistent with findings by Kormos et al. (2011) and Al-Hoorie (2018). Kormos et al. (2011) noted its relevance for university students but not for younger learners, while Véliz-Campos et al. (2020) reported similarly low ratings for university students. Sato and Lara (2019) also found higher scores for the ideal L2 self and Learning Experiences compared to the ought-to L2 self among university students. In contrast, Inostroza et al. (2024) observed higher parent-oriented motivation in younger learners. Although their study focused on parent-oriented motivation rather than the ought-to L2 self, both concepts reflect external pressures influencing learners. This suggests a developmental shift from external expectations to personal goals as students mature, highlighting the diminishing influence of the ought-to L2 self with age and the need for age-specific motivational strategies.

The findings of this study, along with those of Inostroza et al. (2024), suggest that language motivation evolves with age, with younger learners more influenced by external factors like parental expectations (similar to the ought-to L2 self) and secondary students driven by their own aspirations and positive learning experiences (ideal L2 self). This aligns with Kormos and Csizér's (2008) observation that motivational dynamics vary across age groups, underscoring the importance of developing age-specific strategies that reflect these evolving influences.

The Relationship Between Language Mindsets and L2 Motivation

Positive Relationship Between Growth Mindsets and the Ideal L2 Self

The study found a statistically significant positive correlation between growth mindsets and the ideal L2 self. This suggests that students who believe in their capacity to improve are more likely to envision a future where English proficiency plays a critical role, supporting the framework proposed by Lou and Noels (2020). In the Chilean context, where aspirations for better educational and professional opportunities are strong motivators, encouraging students to adopt a growth mindset could help them develop a clearer and more compelling vision of their ideal L2 self, thereby enhancing their motivation to learn English. This finding is consistent with Zarrinabadi et al. (2022), who reported a similar positive correlation between growth mindsets and the ideal self among Iranian learners, and with Cacali's (2019) study of Japanese university students, suggesting that the relationship between growth mindsets and the ideal L2 self may be a universal phenomenon.

Association Between Growth Mindsets and Positive ELE

Growth mindsets were also positively correlated with ELE, indicating that students who believe in their potential for improvement tend to find greater enjoyment and satisfaction in their language learning experiences. This intrinsic enjoyment is associated with their motivation and commitment to achieving their ideal L2 self. Studies by Lou and Noels (2017, 2020) and Elahi Shirvan et al. (2024) have shown that learners with growth mindsets exhibit greater resilience and are better equipped to cope with challenges, which may lead to more positive attitudes in language learning contexts. In Chile, fostering growth mindsets could be particularly beneficial in overcoming the challenges associated with low English proficiency levels and enhancing student motivation and engagement in a context where motivation and effective language learning strategies are crucial for achieving educational goals.

Negative Relationship Between Growth Mindsets and the Ought-to L2 Self

The study found a negative correlation between growth mindsets and the ought-to L2 self, suggesting that students with growth mindsets are less influenced by external pressures or obligations. This finding aligns with Lou and Noels' (2020) framework, which highlights the connection between mindsets and the ideal L2 self, as well as similar findings by Zarrinabadi et al. (2022) and Cacali (2019). Learners with growth mindsets are more likely to set goals aligned with their ideal L2 self and view challenges as opportunities to enhance their language proficiency, rather than being driven by the perceived obligations and external expectations associated with the ought-to L2 self.

In this study, the ought-to L2 self appears to be less relevant as a motivating factor, possibly because learners with growth mindsets prioritize personal growth and internal goals over external pressures, such as societal expectations or perceived responsibilities. This contrasts with common motivations in the Chilean context, where learning English is often associated with economic aspirations and the desire for upward mobility, driven by the country's efforts to integrate more deeply into the global economy (Icef Monitor, 2016; International Trade Administration, 2022). Although economic aspirations may initially motivate some students, fostering a growth mindset could help shift their focus toward more intrinsic goals, as suggested by Tapia Castillo (2025), such as the ideal L2 self. This shift would not only enhance their L2 Learning Experience but also make the learning process more meaningful and self-driven. Encouraging this mindset can lead to a deeper, more self-sustained engagement in language learning, beyond merely fulfilling external economic aspirations.

Moreover, the findings from this study contrast with those of Inostroza et al (2024), who observed a stronger influence of parent-oriented motivation among

younger learners in Chile. This suggests a developmental shift in motivational drivers as students grow older and begin to cultivate a more autonomous sense of self in their language learning journey. While younger learners may be more influenced by parental expectations and guidance, older students appear to prioritize their own aspirations and beliefs about personal growth. This highlights the importance of educational practices that support autonomy and foster intrinsic motivation, as these are crucial for sustaining long-term engagement and success in language learning.

Pedagogical Implications for Nurturing Motivation: Integrating Growth Mindset, Fostering Ideal L2 Selves, and Incorporating Student Interests in Learning Experiences

This section of the study underscores the necessity of practical, context-sensitive applications of motivational theories in the classroom, aligning with the broader call for more applied research in this field (Ushioda, 2020). Motivation has been one of the most extensively researched topics in language education (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Ushioda, 2012; Williams et al., 2015), yet there is often a gap between theoretical constructs and their implementation in classroom settings. This gap becomes particularly evident in compulsory education, where language learning is not always a student's choice, and teachers must take an active role in sustaining motivation by providing relevant content, tasks, and activities that resonate with students' interests and future goals (Csizér & Illés, 2020). The findings of the present study emphasize the importance of addressing growth mindsets, ideal L2 self, and ELE simultaneously to maximize their motivational impact on students. Rather than approaching these factors in isolation, educators should integrate them into a cohesive pedagogical strategy.

The study revealed a significant association between language mindsets and L2 motivation, particularly concerning the ideal L2 self and the ELE. These findings are supported by research from Blackwell et al. (2007) and Tapia Castillo (2025), who have demonstrated the positive influence of a growth mindset on motivation. Consequently, educators should actively foster a growth mindset in language learning, recognizing their pivotal role in nurturing this mindset among learners (Dweck, 1999, 2008, 2017; Lou & Noels, 2016, 2017, 2019). The following pedagogical implications offer a framework for implementing these insights into classroom practices, aiming to enhance English language motivation among Chilean secondary students. While tailored to the Chilean context, may also offer valuable insights for other countries or regions facing similar challenges in English language education, particularly those with limited interaction with English speakers, economic aspirations tied to bilingualism, and monolingual populations.

It is essential that all proposed activities accommodate the varying English proficiency levels of students. Although national examinations indicate that many Chilean secondary students have a generally low level of English proficiency, some perform better than others (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2012, 2015, 2018). Growth mindset theory advocates for appropriately challenging all students. Activities should not solely target lower-proficiency learners but should aim to push each student to improve, regardless of their starting level. By ensuring that all students are supported and challenged, educators can foster a growth-oriented environment that motivates students to put forth effort and achieve their learning goals.

Integrating Growth Mindset Principles into English Language Instruction

Recent studies suggest that developing a growth mindset classroom culture is effective in creating conducive learning environments (Murphy et al., 2021). Instead of limiting growth mindset integration to specific workshops or activities, it may be more beneficial to embed it in everyday classroom practices. Classroom agreements developed collectively by students and teachers can focus on norms that promote risk-taking, persistence, and viewing mistakes as learning opportunities. Regularly revisiting these agreements will help maintain a growth-oriented environment.

In addition, educators can employ empirically validated strategies to promote growth mindsets in language learning. Lessons on neuroplasticity, for instance, illustrate that intelligence is not fixed but can be developed through effort (Dweck, 2008, 2017). Incorporating activities and materials that address language learning beliefs can further reinforce a growth mindset by challenging misconceptions and supporting accurate beliefs with facts and real experiences (Lou & Noels, 2017; Tapia Castillo, 2025). Praising students for their hard work and persistence in learning a new language, rather than emphasizing their innate abilities, can also foster this mindset (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Engaging students in discussions and evidence-based exploration to demonstrate that language proficiency can be achieved within the classroom is particularly important in resource-limited contexts like Chile (Tapia Castillo, 2025).

Aligning Learning Activities with the Ideal L2 Self

Creating activities aligned with students' future goals and aspirations is essential for fostering motivation. For example, students aiming for careers in technology could work on English projects related to coding, while those interested in travel or tourism could focus on developing cross-cultural

communication skills. Personalized learning modules that allow students to choose themes such as music, sports, or technology, and develop language projects around these topics, can make language learning more relevant by linking it to personal interests and goals.

Visualization techniques, such as creating vision boards or role-playing future scenarios where students achieve their language goals, can help them imagine themselves successfully using English in their desired future roles (see Sato & Lara, 2019). These practices reinforce the motivational impact of the ideal L2 self by connecting current efforts to long-term aspirations, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful.

To further support this, teachers should encourage students to set personalized language learning goals. Developing a growth mindset is essential for goal-setting, as students who believe in their capacity to improve are more likely to set challenging goals (Dweck, 1999; Lou & Noels, 2016, 2017, 2020). Teachers should guide students in creating and achieving these goals, providing structured plans and clear steps for them to follow (Dweck, 1999; Lou & Noels, 2019). By offering clear direction and steps to follow, educators can empower learners to take ownership of their language learning journey and make meaningful progress.

Creating Engaging English Learning Experiences

Since students find ELE a critical factor in their motivation, educators should focus on creating positive and engaging learning experiences. This involves addressing students' current learning context and fostering positive attitudes. Recognizing that students see English as a means to connect with international friends and colleagues, educators should incorporate collaborative and cross-cultural activities into the curriculum. Group projects, language exchange programs, and virtual interactions with English speakers can enhance the social aspect of language learning, aligning with students' aspirations for multicultural communication.

Incorporating activities that simulate real-world scenarios can provide tangible connections between language learning and students' envisioned futures. These simulations not only enhance language skills but also instill a sense of practicality and applicability. Implement project-based learning that connects language learning to real-world contexts. Project-based learning, where students create a business plan, conduct interviews, or organize cultural events, offers opportunities for authentic language use, making learning more relevant and meaningful.

Utilizing digital tools and multimedia resources that align with students' interests—such as analyzing English lyrics of popular songs, reviewing movies or

TV series, or participating in virtual exchange programs—can make language learning more enjoyable and relevant. These activities may foster positive ELE and increase motivation.

Incorporating topics related to Chilean culture, history, and current events into English lessons while also linking them to global issues can help students see the relevance of English in understanding both their own culture and the broader world. By connecting language learning to local and global contexts, teachers can make lessons more engaging and meaningful, supporting the call for a curriculum more appealing to the Chilean context (Philominraj et al., 2021).

Finally, facilitating opportunities for students to interact with English-speaking communities, such as virtual exchanges with schools abroad or participation in local events involving English speakers, can provide practical applications for language use. These authentic interactions can reinforce the utility of English in real-world situations and further enhance students' ELE.

Conclusion

Aligned with prior investigations (Andrade-Molina et al., 2022; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al. 2011; Papi, 2010; Papi & Teimouri, 2012; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009), this study highlights the pivotal role of students' ideal L2 selves and their English learning experiences in shaping motivation. Driven by aspirations for enhanced opportunities, multicultural communication, and personal enjoyment, learners envision futures rich with meaningful conversations, travel, educational pursuits, professional endeavors, and linguistic fluency. Through actual English language experiences, students reveal multifaceted motivations, ranging from recognizing language improvement and appreciating English as an elegant language to understanding its practical utility, embracing challenges, valuing communication, and appreciating diverse learning methods. Nonetheless, the results highlight the minimal impact of the ought-to L2 self compared to the profound influence of personal dreams and experiences on motivation. Furthermore, the statistical analysis of LM and L2MSS questionnaires emphasizes a significant association between language mindset and L2 motivation, particularly concerning the ideal L2 self and ELE.

In the context of persistent challenges in English language education in Chile, previous studies have advocated for reforms in ELT policies (Barahona, 2016b), greater awareness of the multifaceted benefits of learning English (Glas, 2008), and the development of culturally relevant curricula (Philominraj et al., 2021). Recognizing motivation as a key factor in language acquisition, this study aligns with the broader goal of enhancing English language learning experiences and proposes methods to nurture motivation among secondary students.

Building on insights from students' ideal L2 selves and English learning experiences, this research suggests aligning language learning activities with personal and professional goals, incorporating real-world simulations, and fostering collaborative, cross-cultural activities that can enrich the social dimension of language learning, thereby fostering a genuine passion for English among students. Educators can integrate a diverse array of teaching methods and strike a balance between challenges and attainable goals. In alignment with previous research (e.g., Jennings & Cuevas, 2021; Tapia Castillo, 2025), this study suggests that the development of a growth mindset may be a promising approach to fostering motivation. By incorporating growth mindset principles into their pedagogical practices, educators can create an environment that enhances language proficiency while cultivating a sense of empowerment and resilience among students. This proactive approach to fostering a growth mindset aligns with the broader goal of inspiring a lifelong passion for learning and personal development.

While this research makes a valuable contribution to understanding L2 motivation, it is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size and specific participant characteristics—primarily individuals inclined toward a growth mindset with medium to high levels of motivation—may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study predominantly gathered data from students who voluntarily participated, potentially excluding less motivated or lower-performing learners. Future research should aim for more diverse participant profiles and larger sample sizes to capture a broader range of motivational drivers and dynamics. Although the translation of the LM and L2MSS questionnaires was thorough and included a review of the translated items by a linguistic expert and pilot testing, future studies could benefit from a more robust validation process. This could involve further expert evaluations, professional translations, or the use of back-translation procedures to guarantee a more culturally sensitive and precise adaptation of the instruments (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

Nevertheless, this research represents a significant advance in the understanding of L2 motivation and is the first to examine the relationship between language mindsets and L2 motivation in the Chilean context. By bridging the gap between theoretical constructs and classroom practices, the study provides a foundation for future research and pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing English language learning. Further exploration could assess the broader impact of the discussed motivational strategies across different contexts and examine how fostering growth mindsets can reframe students' relationships with language learning, ultimately contributing to their long-term academic and professional success.

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Balanced vs. Skewed Input in L2 Argument Construction Learning: A Replication and Extension of Casenhiser and Goldberg (2005)

Abstract

The paper compares the effectiveness of balanced and skewed input at facilitating the acquisition of a novel construction by learners of English as a foreign language. The study replicates and extends Casenhiser and Godberg's (2005) seminal paper on L1 construction acquisition. The study argues that the previous research did not pay sufficient attention to the frequency-prototypicality connection, as observed in natural language usage, and makes an attempt to overcome this limitation by adopting a more principled approach to this issue, which takes into consideration the frequency effects.

Polish university students ($N = 80$) were randomly assigned either to skewed frequency groups, where the input was skewed towards the prototypical exemplars of the novel appearance construction, or a balanced frequency group, where the input was evenly distributed among the exemplars of this construction. Both groups were tested on comprehension of the target structure. The results suggest a facilitative effect of balanced input, as compared to the skewed input. This result was found to be correlated with the degree of cognitive/experiential entrenchment of the situations coded by the test exemplars, that is, the balanced frequency group significantly outperformed the control group only on tasks depicting highly familiar and frequently encountered scenes.

Keywords: balanced input, token frequency, type frequency, skewed input, usage-based grammar

A central task in language acquisition involves learning the associations between novel phrasal forms and novel meanings, variously referred to as linking rules, lexical patterns, or constructions. One way to address these associations has been to argue that they are an innate endowment of the human mind (Chomsky, 1980) and, therefore, do not require any conscious effort on the part of the language learner. However, this theory has been criticised for its lack of

psychological plausibility and appears to have lost much of its original appeal in favour of what is now known as *the usage-based approach* to language acquisition. The main argument of the usage-based theory is that form-meaning associations are learnable from the input and that the learning process is strongly influenced by the frequency with which these associations occur in linguistic input. The possibility of there being a causal link between frequencies of occurrence and learners' ability to generalize over the meanings of abstract syntactic patterns has been examined empirically from a number of standpoints. The present paper focuses on one particular strand of this research, namely the one dealing with the facilitatory effect of *skewed* versus *balanced input* in the acquisition of argument structure patterns. This line of research has been pursued by Casenhiser and Goldberg (2005) and Goldberg et al. (2004, 2007), who argue that the acquisition of L1 argument structure patterns (by children and adults alike) is greatly facilitated by the presence of a high-frequency verb in the input. The objective of the present paper is to replicate Casenhiser and Goldberg's (2005) and Goldberg et al.'s (2004) seminal papers with a population of college students of English as a foreign language with a view to assessing whether the same principle applies to adult L2 construction learning. Significantly, I argue in this paper that previous studies have not paid sufficient attention to the fact that, in natural language use, the high-frequency items are prototypical members of the categories that they represent—a limitation that may have somewhat distorted earlier results. The present study attempts to overcome this limitation by modifying and extending the original study design to account for the prototypicality effect, thereby aligning with the assumptions of the usage-based approach. The details of the study are provided in the further sections of the paper. However, I will first present a brief outline of the usage-based approach, which provides the theoretical framework for this study, followed by an overview of previous research on the role of skewed and balanced input in L1 and L2 construction learning.

Theoretical Background

Constructional (usage-based) approaches define language as a vast, monostatal and multifaceted inventory of constructions—conventionalized pairings of linguistic forms with meaning (Croft, 2001; Fillmore & Kay 1993; Goldberg, 2006, 2019; Langacker, 1987, 2008). Constructions run the full gamut of linguistic units, ranging from single words, to various phrasal units (fixed or with open slots), to abstract syntactic patterns such as the ditransitive or the passive construction. Seen from this perspective, language learning is acquiring the associations between various morphosyntactic patterns and their meanings.

Significantly, usage-based theories argue that input provides adequate and sufficient means for constructions to be learned, and that the learning process is governed by general cognitive abilities (e.g., the ability to generalize over similar instances or pattern recognition abilities), rather than by a special-purpose language module (Bybee, 2008, 2010; Bybee & Beckner, 2010; Goldberg, 2006; Ellis, 2013; Ellis & Cadierno, 2009; Ellis & Wulff, 2014; Lieven & Tomasello, 2008; Tomasello, 2000, 2003, 2012). In other words, language is a dynamic system that emerges from the speaker's accumulated experience of linguistic forms rather than being a biological or genetic endowment. As put by Ellis (2002), acquisition of grammar is "the piecemeal learning of many thousands of constructions and the frequency-biased abstraction of regularities within them" (p. 144). Frequencies of occurrence are arguably a crucial driving force behind language acquisition. Frequency leads to entrenchment and automatization—high-frequency constructions are processed with greater facility and are stored in memory for a longer span of time than low frequency constructions (Anderson, 1992; Bybee, 2006, 2007; Diessel, 2004, 2007; Ellis, 2002).

Two types of frequencies have been shown to be of significance in learning argument structure constructions: type and token frequency.¹ The former records how often a particular linguistic item appears in a constructional slot, while the latter refers to the number of distinct words in a construction. Usage-based theories distinguish between different roles of these two types of frequency. Token frequency is believed to promote entrenchment of particular constructions, whereas type frequency is argued to be responsible for the productivity of constructional schemas and making them accessible for use in new contexts (Bybee, 2001, 2008; Bybee & Thompson, 2000; Ellis, 2002, 2009, Ellis et al., 2016; Taylor, 2002). An important empirical finding of usage-based research is that these two types of frequencies are related through Zipf's law (Zipf, 1935). This means that the frequency distribution of the words occupying the verbal slots in constructions is such that one high-frequency token takes lion's share of all the occurrences (Ellis & O'Donnell, 2012; O'Donnell & Ellis, 2010). To illustrate, corpus-based studies have revealed that the most frequent type occurring in the English ditransitive construction (SVOO) is *give*, and that it significantly outnumbers all the other verbs used in this construction (Stefanowitsch & Gries, 2003). First language acquisition research also provides empirical evidence in support of Zipfian distribution, showing that the child's early use of verb argument constructions is strongly skewed towards one high-frequency item (Goldberg et al., 2004). Significantly, it has been argued that these high-frequency tokens

¹ Verb argument constructions are "semi-abstract patterns that comprise verbs and the arguments they occur with, such as V about N, V into N, V of N [...]" (Ellis & Ogden, 2017, p. 606). Significantly, constructional approaches treat these patterns as meaningful in and of themselves, that is, as having meanings of their own, which are independent of the lexical meanings of words that happen to fill them.

represent the most prototypical exemplars of the categories they belong to and that the meanings they convey are more generic than the meanings of other verbs used in this construction (Goldberg, 2006; Ninio, 1999). For example, *give* is apparently more generic and more representative of the transfer meaning encoded by the ditransitive construction ('cause to receive') than any of the other verbs conventionally associated with this pattern (e.g., tell, offer, show, cost, throw). The same has been observed for naturalistic L2 acquisition. For instance, Ellis and Ferreira-Junior (2009) demonstrate that the input L2 learners are exposed to is Zipfian in the same way as L1 input and that the verbs they first use in various constructional frames tend to be prototypical and semantically generic.

This type of evidence strongly suggests that there might be a causal link between the high frequency of a prototypical verb and the acquisition of particular argument structure constructions. The next section presents an overview of studies that have investigated this possibility using experimental methods.

Skewed vs. Balanced Input: Previous Research

Goldberg and colleagues conducted a series of experiments, with both children and adults, to investigate whether there was a causal relationship between the high frequency of a prototypical verb filling a constructional slot and the acquisition of that construction (Casenhiser & Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg et al., 2004; Goldberg et al., 2007). Their aim was to determine whether the presence of a high-frequency, prototypical exemplar in the input had any effect on the participants' ability to comprehend and produce a morphologically novel construction (NP1NP2V) with the corresponding novel meaning of appearance (NP1 appears in the place designated by NP2). The participants were divided into three conditions: skewed frequency group, balanced frequency group and control group. In the skewed frequency condition half of the instances of the novel construction the subjects were presented contained the same verb, which was presented as prototypical. In the balanced condition group, on the other hand, the verbs were equally spread over the input sentences, with none of them being considered prototypical. The training session was immediately followed by testing, which showed that the skewed frequency condition produced significantly better learning results than the balanced group, which in turn showed a statistically significant improvement over the control group. The conclusion reached by the experimenters was that learning grammar constructions by L1 learners, children and adults alike, is greatly enhanced by the existence of a high-frequency prototypical exemplar in the input, and that this

positive effect manifests itself both in comprehension and production of the novel form-meaning pairings.

Goldberg et al.'s research has inspired L2 researchers to investigate the impact of skewed frequency input on the acquisition of new constructional meanings by L2 learners. However, this research failed to replicate Goldberg et al.'s optimistic findings regarding the facilitative effect of skewed input. For example, Year and Gordon's 2009 study, testing Korean children's learning of the English double object and prepositional dative constructions, did not find any significant impact of input skewedness. The results from both elicited production and acceptability judgment tasks showed that children in both the skewed and balanced frequency conditions demonstrated significant but comparable improvement in correctly recognizing and producing the ditransitive sentences. Also, both groups showed significant increase in their ability to generalize the constructional pattern to novel ditransitive constructions. However, overall, there were no significant differences between these two groups. Significantly, insofar as the groups differed in this experiment, it was the balanced frequency group that produced more grammatically correct ditransitive sentences, and they retained this ability over a longer period than the skewed frequency group.

McDonough and Nekrasova-Becker (2012) and McDonough and Trofimovich (2013) also investigated the effects of input skewedness on L2 construction acquisition. The former study tested the acquisition of the English dative construction by Thai learners of English as a foreign language under the skewed and balanced input conditions, whereas the latter compared the effectiveness of these two types of input at facilitating the comprehension of a transitive Esperanto construction by another group of Thai speakers. Both studies found that the balanced input was more effective than skewed input at promoting the comprehension of L2 constructions. Finally, Nakamura (2012), in a replication and extension of the study by Casenhiser and Goldberg (2005), found no significant positive effect of skewed input on the comprehension of a novel appearance construction and the Samoan ergative construction. Moreover, he showed that the production of the Samoan construction was negatively affected by exposure to skewed input.

Given these results, one might wonder whether L1 and L2 construction learning proceed along two different paths as far as the effects of type and token frequencies are concerned, with skewed input having a facilitative effect only on the acquisition of L1 constructions. In order to be able to address this question, we must first resolve the issue of semantic prototypicality of high-frequency tokens used in the experiments under consideration (cf. Introduction). As Ellis et al. (2016) point out, "we should investigate these processes while remembering that skewed input with high-frequency types aligned with more central meanings is the natural structure of language usage and acquisition" (p. 303). However, determining what should count as the central meaning (constructional

prototype) is not always a straightforward matter. While in natural languages degrees of prototypicality can be determined on the basis of frequencies of occurrence, invented (non-existent) constructions pose a greater challenge in this regard. In the experiments reported above, the issue of prototypicality has either not been mentioned at all or has only been addressed in passing, without sufficient clarification. Goldberg et al. (2004) provide only a single sentence explaining that “to be consistent with the finding that the most frequent verb had a very general meaning, the high-token-frequency exemplar was designed to encode the meaning of ‘appearance’ in a very general way, without designating a particular manner” (p. 300).

However, no further explication of the generality criterion has been provided in this or other studies, apart from listing the sentences used in the study and explaining their meanings. Hence, the prototypical scenes of appearance are the ones that depict: *the rabbit appearing on the hat, the frog dropping down onto the box, the bug appearing onto the table, the ball rolling into the room*. The non-prototypical scenes of appearance, on the other hand, depict *the monster wiggling out from under the cloth, the king dropping down into the chair, the sun rising into the sky, the queen rolling onto the stage* (cf. Casenhiser & Goldberg, 2005). Unfortunately, it remains unclear how the prototypical instances should be distinguished from the non-prototypical ones, especially since most of them involve some kind of motion, and thus seem to designate “a particular manner” rather than “appearance in a very general way.” However, aside from the specific exemplars, a more important question is whether scenes of appearance that do not specify “the manner” are indeed instances of prototypical appearance. After all, our shared experiential knowledge tells us that things or people do not appear as if touched by a magic wand. On the contrary, their appearance is usually marked for manner, for example, people often appear by entering certain locations and things come into view or attract our attention as a result of being a part of different motion scenarios. Hence, if frequency of occurrence is the primary indicator of prototypicality, it can be assumed that prototypical appearance involves some kind of movement rather than arising from miraculous scenarios. Therefore, given these uncertainties, the present study codes and analyses different types of appearance, ranging from “appearance in general” to more specific scenes, most of which involve some kind of motion, and are hypothesized to be better candidates for the semantic prototype of the appearance construction. This hypothesis will be discussed in more detail in the next section, which deals specifically with the design of the study, its hypotheses and participants.

The Experiment: Design, Hypotheses, and Participants

Since the experiment was designed as a replication of Goldberg et al. (2004) and Casenhiser and Goldberg (2005), the same target construction was used, that is, a novel phrasal form (N1N2V), with the verbal slot filled with nonce verbs, and paired with the appearance meaning (NP1 comes to exist in NP2). The construction was both syntactically novel—it had SOV word order as opposed to the standard SVO word order—and semantically novel in that there is no verb argument construction in English devoted to the appearance meaning. As pointed out in the preceding section, in addition to the effects of input frequencies of lexical fillers of this construction (high vs. balanced), the present study has been designed to control for the types of situations coded by particular input exemplars. Therefore, eight scenes of appearance have been created, including scenes of general appearance, as defined by Goldberg et al. (2004) (without specifying its manner), and scenes of appearance that specify a particular manner. The former category comprises scenes which show an entity that occurs spontaneously, without any internal or external cause, as if by magic: *presents appear under Christmas tree*, *a picture appears on an empty wall*, *a pimple appears on a boy's nose*, *a rainbow appears in the sky*. Three other scenes depict appearance combined with a particular manner of motion: *a referee runs into the stadium* (forward, pedestrian motion), *a spider drops onto the table from out of sight* (downward motion), *a flower grows out of a thicket of grass* (upward motion). The last scene depicts a *smile appearing on a girl's face*, which represents a more abstract, metonymically motivated appearance (effect for cause). The input sentences have been constructed in such a way as to reflect varying degrees of prototypicality. As noted above, prototypicality tends to be operationalized as frequency of occurrence, hence the scenes of appearance designed for this study can be arranged on a cline, with the opposite poles occupied by scenes that depict purely imaginative acts (in this study this category overlaps with Casenhiser and Goldberg's "general appearance"), and situations that constitute common everyday experience (e.g., entering rooms). There is also an intermediate category, which can be positioned between these two poles—these are real-life situations that, however, are not part of recurring everyday experience (e.g., rainbow appearing in the sky). All the sentences constructed for this experiment are provided in Appendix 1 (see Tables 1–3). The general hypothesis posed in this study is that the type of input—skewed vs. balanced—affects learning new constructional meanings. Given our uncertainties concerning the semantic prototype of the appearance construction, two types of skewedness have been tested: the one in which the high-frequency item is paired with "general appearance" (without specifying the manner), and the one

in which the high-frequency verb occurs in constructions denoting specific appearance (specified for manner). The specific hypotheses are outlined below:

- I. Hypothesis 1: Skewed input in which high-frequency items are paired with sentences depicting general appearance will facilitate the acquisition of the appearance construction by L2 learners. The general appearance corresponds to scenes depicting various miraculous acts, that is, the ones that are not marked for manner.
- II. Hypothesis 2: Skewed input in which high-frequency items are paired with sentences depicting appearance marked for manner will facilitate the acquisition of the appearance construction by L2 learners. As specified above, the prototypicality of these instances is judged based on the frequencies of occurrence of particular scenes in real life.
- III. Hypothesis 3: Balanced input (in which lexical fillers of the appearance construction are spread evenly over the input sentences) will facilitate the acquisition of the appearance construction by L2 learners.

Altogether, a total of 80 undergraduates participated in the study as part of an extra-credit course requirement. All participants were native speakers of Polish majoring in English as a foreign language at one of Polish colleges of higher education. They ranged from 18 to 21 years of age. The participants were randomly and equally assigned to four treatment conditions: skewed frequency 1 ($N = 20$), in which the high-frequency item was paired with scenes of general appearance (see Table 1, Appendix 1), skewed frequency 2 ($N = 20$), in which the high-frequency verb was paired with scenes depicting appearance marked for manner (see Table 2, Appendix 1), balanced frequency ($N = 20$), in which verbal fillers were spread equally across the training sentences (see Table 3, Appendix 1), control condition ($N = 20$), which received no treatment. The research activities were conducted during regularly scheduled classroom sessions by the same instructor. Participants were informed that they would watch some video clips and read and listen to sentences with new words describing the scenes depicted in the scenes. They were instructed to listen carefully to the sentences and try to understand their meanings. The instructions were provided in Polish.

Participants in the balance and high token frequency condition saw eight film clips, each of which depicted a different scene of appearance. Both the skewed and the balanced condition participants listened to the same five non-sense verbs—the difference between the two groups being in the frequency with which the verbs occurred in the sentences. In the balanced condition three verbs occurred twice and two verbs occurred once (2–2–2–1–1). In the skewed condition, on the other hand, one verb occurred four times and four verbs occurred once (4–1–1–1–1). The scenes were played twice, hence the participants saw 16 clips altogether. In the skewed frequency condition, the sentences with high-frequency items were introduced first, since the earlier research showed

that the forward order had a positive effect on the acquisition of the target construction. In the balanced group, on the other hand, the order of presentation was random. Each clip contained a sentence describing the scene displayed at the bottom so that participants could read it while watching the clips as they unfolded. Also, while watching the clips, respondents listened to the trainer who read the sentences out. All video clips were converted into digital computer files and presented as power-point slides.

The training was immediately followed by testing phase, which consisted of forced-choice tasks. As in the training session, participants viewed short video clips depicting the appearance construction with a description sentence at the bottom of the screen. They also heard the sentence spoken aloud by the instructor. Fourteen new clips were created with new nonce verbs to avoid the possibility that the participants just memorized the strings presented in the training rather than learning the meaning ascribed to the new pattern. The clips were arranged into seven pairs, that is, two clips were presented side by side on the computer screen. They were designed in such a way that one of them depicted a scene in which an entity comes into sight, whereas the second one portrayed a very similar scene with the objects or characters remaining in constant view or disappearing from the view. For example, in one of the scenes a pair of glasses appears on a man's face, while in the second clip the glasses fall off his face. The sentences were constructed by analogy to the training sentences, that is, they reflected a similar range of situations—apart from scenes of general appearance, where an entity comes into view spontaneously or as if by magic, the clips presented a particular manner of appearance, that is, forward, upward and downward motion, as well as metonymic meaning (see Table 4, Appendix 1 for the list of the test sentences). Each of the three conditions in both experimental groups saw exactly the same sets of clips. While watching the scenes, participants were asked to pick the clip that corresponded to the descriptions that they heard. They did it by filling a questionnaire form provided by the instructor. In the no-training condition, respondents went directly to the test phase without watching either video. The order of presentation was randomized, so that the scenes of appearances or non-appearance did not follow a predictable sequence. In addition to seven pairs of test clips, participants saw four pairs of filler clips to conceal the true purpose of the experiment. The clips were paired with sentences with novel verbs in a familiar pattern SVO or SVA. Filler sentences were not analysed in this study. All the answers were coded for accuracy. The results of the experiment are presented in the next section.

Results

The independent variable that was manipulated in the experiment was the input type—balanced versus skewed. As pointed out in the section above, two types of skewedness were analysed—the one involving the pairing of skewed frequencies with general appearance, on the one hand, and the one where the high-frequency item was inserted into constructions denoting specific appearance (i.e., various motion events). The depended variable was the accuracy with which the participants paired the novel pattern with the appearance meaning. Table 1 presents the means scored on the forced choice tasks in the four groups (the two experimental groups, the balanced group and the control group) and the standard deviations:

Table 1
Experimental Results

Condition	Number of correct choices (mean out of 7)	SD	Median
Skewed-input (1)	3.7	2.12	4
Skewed-input (2)	3.9	1.97	4
Balanced	5.0	3.49	5
Control	2.9	1.17	3

As can be seen, the balanced frequency group performed much better than the skewed frequency groups (1) and (2), whose performance was approximately at the same level. This shows that the type of skewedness did not have any major effect on the participants’ ability to learn the new constructional meaning. However, the skewed frequency groups showed a clear improvement over the control group, indicating that they have acquired knew knowledge about constructional meaning from the input provided. The control group, on the other hand, did not perform any better than chance.

Two one way Anovas were performed (separately for the two types of skewedness) to confirm the effect of balanced input on the acquisition of the appearance construction. Both tests confirmed the significant effect for type of training: The *f*-ratio value for the first data subset (skewed input 1) is 9.1618; The *p*-value is .001802 and the result is significant at *p* < .05. For the second data set (skewed input 2), the *f*-ratio is 9.2372, the *p*-value is .001736 and this result is also significant at *p* < .05.

In the next step, the results obtained in the balanced group have been broken down by individual scenes (exemplars) and analysed for accuracy. As pointed out above, the test sentences were constructed by analogy to the training

sentences, which means that they coded a similar range of situations (general appearance, appearance through forward/upward/downward motion and metonymic appearance). Table 2 presents the percentages of the correct choices for each of the seven comprehension tasks in the three conditions.

Table 2
Proportions of Correct (Expected) Responses for Particular Tasks in the Three Experimental Conditions

The scene of appearance		Balanced (N = 20)	Skewed 1 (N = 20)	Skewed 2 (N = 20)
1	The glasses appear on the man's nose.	55%	35%	45%
2	Santa Clause appears on the sleigh.	55%	40%	50%
3	The sun appears in the sky.	65%	45%	55%
4	The teacher enters the classroom from out of sight.	95%	75%	70%
5	The bird comes from out of sight and lands down on the tree branch.	55%	55%	45%
6	The cactus appears on the human hand.	95%	65%	70%
7	Anger appears on the girl's face.	85%	55%	60%

The results of the experiment show that participants' performance varied depending on the type of scene they were exposed to. In the balanced group, which outperformed both skewed conditions (cf. Table 1), the best scores were achieved on tasks (4), (6), (7), with the rate of correct choices ranging from 85% to 95%. The other tasks scored significantly worse, and therefore they did not contribute significantly to the overall positive score of the balanced condition. As can be seen, the highest scores (95%) come from the task portraying a teacher entering a classroom (as opposed to the teacher walking back and forth inside of a classroom) and the cactus appearing on the hand (as opposed to the cactus only growing higher on one's hand). Also, participants' performance on the task portraying anger appearing on a girl's face was significantly high, with 85% of correct choices. The worst scores, on the other hand, have been achieved on tasks depicting glasses appearing on a man's face, a Santa Claus appearing on a sleigh, as if by magic, and a bird landing down on a tree branch, each of which scored around the same number of correct choices (55%). Participants performed only slightly better on the task involving the sun appearing in the sky—65% selected the scene of appearance, rather than the scene with the sun being in constant view and then setting down.

Discussion

The results presented in the previous section indicate that L2 learners' acquisition of new form-meaning pairings is influenced not only by the type of input (lexically diverse input proving more beneficial than skewed input) but also by the semantic properties of individual items constituting the balanced input. The second part of the experiment revealed that participants performed considerably better on tasks portraying specific appearance than on those involving general appearance, as defined earlier. As shown in the results, the highest scores were achieved on tasks portraying common, everyday types of activities or situations whereas the lowest scores occurred in tasks involving magical acts of appearance. It goes without saying that entering rooms, buildings, or other types of enclosures is an inevitable part of our day-to-day routine. By the same token, humans, as a highly social species, are regularly exposed to the faces of other people, who communicate various messages and emotions through their facial expressions, such as smiling or anger (which are arguably the most commonly encountered facial signals). Participants' high performance on the task portraying a cactus appearing on one's hand (task 6), which is apparently an unusual or miraculous occurrence, might be seen as an exception to this tendency. However, it is not necessarily so if we recognize that this task provides a reference to a common idiomatic expression in contemporary Polish, meaning that one thinks that something is very unlikely or will never happen (corresponding roughly to the English "when the hell freezes over"). Needless to say, idiomatic expressions have special linguistic and cultural status—they are established by common usage, representing generally accepted and widely used expressions (often easily visualized in speakers' minds by evoking vivid images).

Finally, let us consider tasks (3) and (5), with the former scoring only slightly better (65%) than the latter (55%). Both tasks portray real-life situations rather than magical acts, however, the events they depict can barely be described as being part of our daily routine. Specifically, one does not regularly watch birds flying over trees (unless one is an expert specializing in birds' behaviour), and, even more so, we seldom get the chance to admire sunrises, although, of course, this might happen occasionally. Therefore, although these situations do not represent "general appearance" in the same way as tasks (1) or (2), they are not the types of situations we encounter very often in our daily routine, either. In other words, they occupy the "middle ground" on our prototypicality continuum, as defined earlier.

The tendency observed in the balanced group appears to extend to the two skewed frequency conditions (see Table 2), except that the differences between the best- and worst-performing tasks are less pronounced. As skewed

frequencies did not have any significant positive impact on learning gains, they will not be discussed further.

The current experiment does not provide evidence supporting the facilitative effect of input skewedness on the learning of new verb argument constructions in an L2 instructional setting. While the use of a single, high-frequency token did not prove to be particularly helpful in the acquisition of the semantics associated with the novel appearance construction (regardless of the type of skewedness), the results of the experiment show that a balanced selection of verbs evoking frequently encountered situation types did have a significantly positive impact on learning gains. This appears to be consonant with some earlier L2 construction acquisition studies, most notably with Year and Gordon (2009), McDonough and Nekrasova-Becker (2014) and McDonough and Trofimovich (2013). However, it must be emphasized at this point that these studies are not directly comparable to the current research due to several significant differences in study design. Specifically, the former two studies investigate the effects of skewed vs. balanced input on the acquisition of an authentic English construction (the English ditransitive/dative construction) by L2 learners of English. While these studies produced interesting results, the learners' prior knowledge of English, as well as cross-linguistic transfer, might have influenced the learning outcomes. It appears that the use of an artificial language offers a more suitable methodological option for exploring language learning processes under controlled conditions. This is apparently the approach adopted in McDonough and Trofimovich (2013), who studied the acquisition of an Esperanto accusative construction and argued for the greater effectiveness of balanced input, following deductive instruction. However, as the authors explicitly admit, their study does not control for the prototypicality of the high-frequency items in any way, which somewhat weakens the results, although it does not entirely invalidate them.

The results obtained in the current study are not entirely unexpected when viewed from the perspective of L2 classroom practice. One common approach to teaching new syntactic structures is the inductive method, which involves providing learners with examples of various uses of a new construction (filled with different words) and requiring them to draw generalizations about its meaning. Given that participants of the experiment were all adult L2 learners with extensive experience in classroom-based L2 learning, it is possible that their prior learning experience and explicit learning environment associated with the formal classroom setting influenced the way they approached the target construction. In addition, as mentioned earlier, construction grammar research on language acquisition suggests that type frequencies are more conducive to category extension and generalization, whereas token frequencies promote entrenchment and category strengthening. The results of the present study appear to suggest that L2 learners might rely on category extension mechanisms to

a greater extent than L1 learners. However, this is a hypothesis that requires further empirical verification.

Importantly, the current experiment indicates that the balanced group's scores were considerably higher on tasks presenting common, everyday types of scenes rather than on tasks dealing with more general situations, which, in our experiment entailed some unusual or even fictitious types of occurrences. This result seems to confirm the general, usage-based theory, namely that "[h]umans are sensitive to the frequencies of events in their experience" (Ellis, 2002, p. 145). Thus, it can be tentatively concluded at this point that the process of construction learning is significantly fostered or at least facilitated to certain extent by input material that is embedded in familiar or experientially grounded conceptions (which is probably true of all kinds of learning). In other words, L2 learners tend to benefit most from exposure to a diversified input that comprises familiar and highly entrenched types of situations when learning the meanings of new morphosyntactic patterns. If familiarity and frequency of occurrence are assumed to indicate semantic prototypicality, as in the present study, the results suggest that prototypicality positively affects L2 learners' acquisition of constructional meanings.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the present study lead us to reject Hypotheses 1 and 2, which assume that skewed input is more beneficial for L2 grammar learning than balanced input, and to accept Hypothesis 3, which attributes greater effectiveness to balanced input. More specifically, it appears that L2 learners benefit more from input consisting of grammar structures filled with a variety of lexical items than from input dominated by a single, high-frequency token. As noted earlier, this result may be due to the explicit learning environment associated with the formal classroom setting. Significantly, the results of this study show that learning gains are greater for constructions that align with typical human experiences and can therefore be regarded as encoding prototypical meanings. This finding becomes more meaningful when we recognize that prototypicality is a gradient phenomenon, with some types of meaning being closer to the prototype than others. Hence, it appears that exposure to lexically diversified input, which nonetheless remains close to the prototype, is more effective for L2 grammar learning than input that places excessive emphasis on the prototype itself.

A few caveats are in order here. Given the design of this study, the results apply only to the comprehension of new constructional meanings. Consequently,

further research might explore how the factors under analysis influence the production of new argument constructions by L2 learners. Another reservation concerns the age of the participants, who were all young adults familiar with various methods and techniques of foreign language learning/ teaching. Thus, the question for future research is whether children's learning of new L2 constructional meanings follows the pattern observed for adults in the present study. On a more general note, further research is needed into other factors optimizing language input. While the present study has shed some light on the role of skewed versus balanced frequencies in L2 constructions learning, it has also generated several questions that merit further empirical investigation. These pertain, among others, to the role of experiential grounding in structuring linguistic input and to the role of input frequencies as category extension and category strengthening mechanisms in L2 acquisition of new morphosyntactic patterns.

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Training and Test Sentences

Table 1
Training Sentences in the Skewed Frequency Group 1

	Scene depicted in the clip	Skewed frequency group 1 (vacun 4, nimbo 1, gerum 1, peksi 1, fegar 1)
a	A rainbow appears on the sky	The rainbow the sky vacuns
b	A pimple appears on a boy's nose	The pimple the nose vacuns
c	A picture appears on the wall	The picture the wall vacuns
d	Presents appear under the Christmas tree	Presents the Christmas tree vacuns
e	A referee runs into the stadium	The referee the stadium nimbos
f	A spider drops onto the table from out of sight	The spider the table gerums
g	A flower grows out of a thicket of grass	The flower the grass peksis
h	Smile appears on a girl's face	The smile the face fegars

Table 2
Training Sentences in the Skewed Frequency Group 2

	Scene depicted in the Clip	Skewed frequency group 2 (vacun 4, nimbo 1, gerum 1, peksi 1, fegar 1)
a	A rainbow appears on the sky	The rainbow the sky nimbos
b	A pimple appears on a boy's nose	The pimple the nose gerums
c	A picture appears on the wall	The picture the wall peksis
d	Presents appear under the Christmas tree	Presents the Christmas tree fegars
e	A referee runs into the stadium	The referee the stadium vacuns
f	A spider drops onto the table from out of sight	The spider the table vacuns
g	A flower grows out of a thicket of grass	The flower the grass vacuns
h	Smile appears on a girl's face	The smile the face vacuns

Table 3
Training Sentences in the Balanced Group

	Scene depicted in the clip	Balanced frequency group (vacun 2, nimbo 2, gerum 2, pekis 1, fegar 1)
a	A rainbow appears on the sky	The rainbow the sky vacuns
b	A pimple appears on a boy's nose	The pimple the nose vacuns
c	A picture appears on the wall	The picture the wall nimbos
d	Presents appear under the Christmas tree	Presents the Christmas tree nimbos
e	A referee runs into the stadium	The referee the stadium gerums
f	A spider drops onto the table from out of sight	The spider the table gerums
g	A flower grows out of a thicket of grass	The flower the grass peksis
h	Smile appears on a girl's face	The smile the face fegars

Table 4
Test Sentence

	Scene of appearance (slide A)	Another scene (slide B)	Test sentence
a	The glasses appear on the man's nose	The glasses fall off the man's nose	Glasses the nose birkuns
b	Santa Claus appears on the sleigh	Santa Claus is riding the sleigh	Santa Claus the sleigh ventis
c	The cactus appears on one's palm and grows taller	The cactus merely grows taller on one's hand	The cactus the hand perums
d	The sun rises in the sky	The sun sets in the sky	The sun the sky mupos
e	The teacher enters the classroom	The teacher is in the classroom walking and explaining things	The teacher class-room virums
f	The bird comes from above (from out of sight) and lands on the tree	The bird already sits on the tree and jumps from one branch to another	The bird the tree nintus
g	Anger appears on the girl's face	Anger disappears from the girl's face	Anger the face likums



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Japanese Native-Speaker Teachers' Use of English in JFL Classrooms: A Comparative Study Across Non-Anglophone Countries Worldwide

Abstract

The article examines the use of English by Japanese native-speaker teachers (NSTs) in their Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) classrooms. A total of 256 Japanese NSTs from 39 countries participated in the research. It also compares English language usage between native and non-native Japanese language teachers (NNSTs) in their teaching practice. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed globally among Japanese language institutions in non-Anglophone countries, and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data analysis. The findings shed light on the preferences for the primary language of instruction and the varying extent of English language use among NSTs and NNSTs. A global perspective of the study provided an opportunity to draw meaningful conclusions concerning: (1) native-speaker teachers' strong preference for using direct methods when teaching in Japan and (2) their becoming more flexible in their choices when teaching Japanese abroad. Native speakers teaching abroad tend to use English more frequently during instructional time compared to those teaching in Japan. The research also suggests that both NSTs and NNSTs utilize multilingual practices (translanguaging and code-switching), incorporating Japanese, students' native languages, and English into their JFL classrooms. The qualitative study of NSTs' beliefs revealed their flexibility and adaptability in tailoring teaching methods to

different students' unique learning needs and preferences, which is essential for reaching and engaging all learners effectively.

Keywords: native speaker teacher (NST), Japanese as a foreign language (JFL), English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as a medium of instruction (EMI), multilingual practices

Japan, with 99.3% of its population speaking Japanese, is among the most monolingual countries (Andreou & Galantomos, 2009; Chapman & Shinya, 2019). The data reflecting the notion of “monolingual Japan” suggest that Japan, as a country, is seen as a cohesive entity with distinct geographical, political, social, and cultural attributes. This leads to the belief that its citizens share common characteristics. As a result, psychology, language, and geography are interconnected in this context (Bouchard, 2018).

Recent developments in methodology indicate that relying solely on one language is not sufficient to maintain Japan's dominance despite its global impact and has consistently faced opposition and debate. Concerns about native speakerism have been expressed in recent linguistic research, highlighting increasing skepticism regarding the importance of native speakers across various domains. For international lingua francas like English, there is an argument that the role of non-native speakers should not be underestimated (Christiansen, 2022; Seidlhofer, 2011). Meanwhile, in Japan, teachers are constantly under public scrutiny due to a perceived lack of English skills and intercultural awareness (Asaoka, 2019).

As stated by Pinxteren (2023), the language of instruction includes not only the language used for oral teaching but also the language found in teaching materials, assessments, and exams. This comprehensive definition covers different forms of language use in educational settings, including dialects, code-switching, translanguaging, and in-class translation. Brock-Utne (2024) points out that “the use of a foreign language, especially English, as the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, has become a social marker of difference” (p. 167). Bichoualne and Rong's research (2024): (1) emphasizes the difficulties associated with using English as the instructional language, (2) stresses the essential need for teacher training in multilingual environments, and (3) recommends incorporating local languages to reflect the region's linguistic diversity.

Several studies were conducted on ELF-oriented research investigating students' beliefs about the use of English in Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) classrooms (Malmborg, 2020; Nakamura, 2005; Turnbull, 2018), international students' willingness to communicate in English versus Japanese as a third language—L3 (Simic, Tanakai, & Yashima, 2007) or code-mixing (switching) by Japanese NSTs and NNSTs (Hobbs, Matsuo, & Payne, 2010; Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020). However, there has been a lack of focus on Japanese teachers' perception

of English as a language of instruction in this setting, especially from a global perspective comparing NSTs' and NNSTs' practice (Hobbs et al., 2010).

Teachers' beliefs largely drive the choice of certain methodological practices and shape classroom activities, often outweighing the emphasis placed by institutional and government policies (Shabir, 2017). Our study, conducted on a supranational level, focuses on teacher-based linguistic practice. The research relied entirely on the teachers' profiles, as opposed to the formal English curriculum offered at various educational institutions.

Literature Review

The Idea of a “Native Speaker”

Researchers problematize the concept of “native speaker” in language research in various countries, highlighting its ambiguity. For instance, Hashimoto (2018) points out that “although the term ‘mother tongue speaker’ (母語話者—*bogo washa*) has not been widely used by the general public, government offices tend to use the term in order to emphasize the ‘non-native’ status of Japanese language learners and teachers, meaning that they are foreigners” (p. 61). The term is somewhat technical and is used mainly by Japanese language teachers, scholars and government officials. The term used in Japanese for “non-native speakers of Japanese” is 日本語非母語話者 (*nihongo hi bogo washa*), which literally translates to “Japanese language non-mother tongue speakers.” While the kanji for “mother tongue speaker” might seem neutral regarding people and languages, its use in the form of “non-mother tongue speaker” serves as a label for non-native speakers of Japanese. This group largely consists of non-Japanese individuals, essentially marking them as foreigners (Hashimoto, 2018).

Researchers investigate the role of the native speaker ideal in foreign language instruction. They conclude that it is one of the most complex and elusive concepts, making the label “native speaker” quite questionable (Andreou & Galantomos, 2009). Davies (2003) explains that the enduring interest of applied linguistics in the idea of a native speaker stems from the requirement for standards, benchmarks, and objectives, regardless of whether the emphasis is on instructing or evaluating a first, second, or foreign language.

Moreover, researchers point out that such ambiguity in interpreting this term may have harmful consequences. They argue that the term is unhelpful for rigorous theory construction and reproduces normative assumptions about behavior, experience, and identity. They recommend that language researchers

completely avoid using the term “native speaker” and propose alternative methods for describing language experience and usage (Cheng et al., 2021).

In our article, we rely on Medgyes’s (1999) classification of English native speakers to define a native Japanese speaker. Therefore, a Japanese native speaker is someone who was born in Japan, learned Japanese during childhood in a Japanese-speaking environment, speaks Japanese as a first language, has a native-like command of Japanese, is capable of producing fluent, spontaneous speech in Japanese characterized by creativity, and has the intuition to distinguish correct or wrong forms in Japanese.

Besides being a complex and multifaceted topic, the issue of native-speakerism intersects with prejudice, discrimination, and language education. The concept of native-speakerism significantly impacts language education by creating a hierarchy that unfairly privileges native speakers over non-native speakers. Dey et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of challenging the native speaker ideal and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of both native and non-native speakers in language instruction. By understanding and addressing these issues, researchers believe we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable language education environment for all (Dey et al., 2023). NSTs must have the necessary qualifications and training to teach a second or foreign language. Being a native speaker does not automatically make someone an excellent language teacher (Gibreel, 2018).

Mogi (2022) studied the changing perception of English among Japanese NSTs in *nihonjin gakkō* (full-time day school for children of Japanese expatriates) and concluded that “while the school principal and English language teachers appreciated the diversity of English, the school’s English education policy and classroom teaching were shaped by native-speakerism ideology and traditional assumptions of Standard English as the only recognized variety” (p. 59).

Native-speakerism in the context of Japanese language teaching is evident in the following beliefs among NSTs about the perceived “advantages” of native speakers, as highlighted in Hashimoto’s study (2018):

- They can provide learners with the satisfaction of being taught by native speakers;
- They can take advantage of students’ native-speakerism;
- They are favored by ordinary people;
- They may receive preferential treatment simply because they are Japanese, regardless of their actual abilities. (p. 73)

In Medgyes’s (1994) study, an international survey was conducted involving a questionnaire distributed to 216 teachers, both native and non-native, across ten countries. The findings indicated that 68% of the participants recognized variances in the teaching approaches of native and non-native English teachers, while only 15% did not observe any differences. In the subsequent research, however, when participants were asked to compare the teaching effectiveness of

NSTs and NNSTs, the results showed a nearly equal split, with 27% favoring the former and 29% favoring the latter. In comparison, 44% of the respondents selected “both” (Medgyes, 2001).

A survey conducted by Hashimoto (2018) among Japanese NSTs reveals their beliefs on whether they think it would be better for Japanese language teachers to be “native speakers” of Japanese. Even though over 50% of the participants provided a neutral response to the initial question, 40% expressed disagreement with the idea that the best Japanese language teacher is a native Japanese speaker. Hashimoto concludes: “This is an interesting finding given that Japanese is predominantly taught by native speakers in Japan and the respondents themselves are native speakers of Japanese” (pp. 71–72). The researcher presumes that the respondents’ views on this question might have been affected by their experience since 90% of them had collaborated with teachers who were non-native speakers (Hashimoto, 2018).

The differences between native and non-native English teachers in their teaching methods, choice of topics, and perceptions of communication were noted in previous studies. Chiba and Matsuura (2004) observed that, compared with native English teachers, Japanese teachers of English varied their approach depending on the subjects they taught, employed a different style of nonverbal cues, and were less concerned with conversational skills. The main difference was that most Japanese teachers supported using the Japanese language (their first language—L1), while native English teachers were hesitant to use it in English classes.

Demir (2011) concludes in his study that language programs should be designed to promote the collaborative work of both NSTs and NNSTs rather than favoring one over the other. In essence, a mix of NSTs and NNSTs could be more beneficial for language programs as each brings unique strengths.

According to Christiansen (2022), “[p]roblems regarding the status of native speaker arise within the specific context of language teaching because the concept itself is often conflated with other issues such as language competence and the questionable advocacy of the so-called direct method” (p. 495).

Direct Method and the Shift towards Multilingual Practices

Historically, teaching methods have relied heavily on the use of learners’ first language when teaching a second language (L2), based on the belief that it was unattainable to teach a new language without incorporating the learners’ native tongue. However, in the latter half of the 20th century, the monolingual approach gained popularity, advocating for L2 instruction without the use of the learners’ first language.

Using the target language as the language of instruction is known as the direct or natural method. The direct method is “a method for teaching language that avoids the use of the native tongue and emphasizes listening and speaking over reading and writing” (Nunan, 1999, p. 306). The direct method, despite its focus on spoken communication, has notable limitations. It can be challenging for students to grasp abstract vocabulary, and the method’s lack of emphasis on reading and writing may hinder the development of comprehensive language skills. At the same time, its reliance on auditory learning may not suit all learners, particularly those who benefit more from visual aids (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024).

Okamura (2008) explored the experiences of NSTs teaching Japanese in New Zealand and noted that some NSTs valued the direct method they had learned in Japan. However, while the direct method worked for some teachers, many found it challenging to use in actual teaching settings abroad, as students needed explanations in English to fully understand the material.

Experts have largely discredited the direct method (Graddol, 2007). Rather than viewing language transfer from the learner’s L1 as unwanted linguistic “interference” causing errors, its positive aspects have been acknowledged. However, in numerous countries, the myth of the direct method’s efficacy persists among non-experts, particularly among the general public (Christiansen, 2022).

Research on second language teaching indicates a significant shift towards using L1 in L2 classrooms, with studies showing that the limited use of L1 can positively affect certain activities (Shabir, 2017; Kraemer, 2006). Furthermore, Mori and Mori (2011) emphasized that approaches used for teaching widely-studied European languages cannot be readily or quickly applied to JFL settings.

Studies on *translanguaging* have highlighted that multilingual language users view their entire linguistic repertoire as a common resource to draw from when communicating and expressing themselves. Consequently, language learners are encouraged to utilize their extensive linguistic knowledge of their L1 and other L2s when learning a new foreign language—L3 (Christiansen, 2022). Similarly, Macaro (2024) notes that while the use of the L1 (or translanguaging) and strategies for enhancing L2 learning have been well-researched, these areas have not been adequately applied to contexts like English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education and therefore, have not been thoroughly investigated.

Using both L1 and L2 in class is commonly referred to as code-mixing or code-switching. *Code-mixing* involves the mixing of elements from two or more languages within a single sentence or clause. *Code-switching*, on the other hand, refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties within a conversation or across sentences and is considered to be an umbrella term. It is regarded as a valuable resource in the communicative repertoire of bilingual or multilingual teachers, allowing them to signal and negotiate various frames and footings, cultural values, role relationships, identities, and other classroom dynamics (Lin, 2017).

The difference between code-switching and translanguaging was summarized by Sato (2023) as follows:

Code-switching emphasizes language switching due to a lack of L2 proficiency, whereas translanguaging is a pedagogical practice that maximizes the use of languages available in the classroom for L2 learning. Teachers should be aware that translanguaging often occurs as a more natural, internal process, based on the speaker's linguistic repertoire and the need to convey meaning most effectively, while code-switching is often used to accommodate the linguistic preference of the interlocutor or the social setting. (Sato, 2023, p. 3)

Code-switching in JFL classrooms was mostly studied regarding beginner-level students (Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020; Putu Dewi Merlyna, 2023). Putu Dewi Merlyna (2023) concluded in her study conducted among Indonesian students that in their speaking activities, beginner learners of Japanese employ three variations of code-mixing: inner, outer, and mixed code-mixing. The data on outer code-mixing indicated English vocabulary usage combined within a single Japanese sentence. The identified forms of code-mixing included doubling and insertion at both word and phrase levels. The researcher noted that “insertion in mixed sentences occurs because inserting a foreign language noun in a sentence is very easy. Not only nouns, however, but other grammatical categories can also be inserted, such as adjectives, adverbs, or others” (Putu Dewi Merlyna, 2023, p. 10).

Muliadi and Haristiani (2020) conducted a study among international students from seven different countries to explain the various types and functions of code-mixing in Japanese language teaching. They discovered that incorporating English alongside Japanese serves several purposes: (1) aiding cross-language transfer, (2) facilitating comprehension of the language being taught, and (3) encouraging students to respond to questions. The researchers concluded that the use of ELF in teaching Japanese is needed to enhance language acquisition and development (Muliadi & Haristiani, 2020).

From the teachers' perspective, Champ's (2014) study revealed that one limitation affecting the usage of *gairaigo* (loanwords from English) in the classroom is the teachers' confidence in using English. Teachers with less confidence struggled with code-switching between English and Japanese, which impacted the extent to which *gairaigo* was used in their instruction.

Overall, as pointed out by Christiansen (2022), the “nativeness” principle (for the use of native speakers as models for non-native speaker learners) in applied linguistics has faced considerable criticism, particularly in research on ELF, which examines language use among predominantly non-native speakers. This critical examination extends to the “native speaker” model in foreign

language education, receiving significant scrutiny in intercultural communicative competence, ELF, and World Englishes (WE).

English as a Medium of Instruction or Lingua Franca

Researchers refer to monolingualism as the illiteracy of the twenty-first century. In the global context, multilingual skills and cultural competence are crucial in shaping the future workforce (Roberts, Leite, & Wade, 2018). At the same time, the worldwide prominence of English is largely driven by the globalization of higher education, the involvement of countries in various international bodies (e.g., NATO, OECD) where English holds official status, and the significant role of multinational companies that rely on English as a lingua franca (Kapranov, 2021).

Until now, most studies on sociolinguistic variation in English have come from inner-circle contexts such as the USA and the UK, which have traditionally favored monolingual ideologies. On the other hand, outer and expanding circle societies usually have a higher prevalence of multilingualism (Botha & Bernaisch, 2024). The complex multilingual dynamics of WE environments raise inquiries about code-switching, translanguaging, language acquisition, contact, and usage (Botha & Bernaisch, 2024; Jenks & Lee, 2020).

EMI and ELF are both growing phenomena in the Japanese context (D'Angelo, 2020; Kikuchi, 2021; Kojima & Fukui, 2024; Konakahara & Tsuchiya, 2020; Kriukow & Galloway, 2019; Morrish, 2020; Toh, 2016). D'Angelo (2020) pointed out that Japan was “one of the first expanding circle countries to embrace WE and other pluralistic perspectives on the English language, known as English as an International Language (EIL), which serve as precursors to the ELF paradigm” (p. 279).

EMI is “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018, p. 37). However, according to the author, this definition is “deliberately open to challenge” (Macaro, 2018).

In their study of EMI in higher education, Hopkyns, Dovchin, and Sultana (2024) pointed out that a major theme in the discussions focused on “monolingual ideologies and the lack of acceptance of the translingual practice, which resulted in translingual discrimination” and challenging conditions for students in EMI contexts. Moreover, the language classroom “would become a site of *translingual socialization*, with activities designed to develop translingual competences” (pp. 15–16).

Nowadays, EMI has been greatly promoted in the Japanese tertiary context (Curle, Xie, Huang, & Yüksel, 2024). However, several challenges have emerged,

such as students struggling to understand and use English in their academic work, difficulties in communication between lecturers and international students, lecturers being unsure if students fully grasped the material and key terms, low participation from Japanese students in class discussions, and students lacking the ability to think critically in English (Curle, Lin, & Aizawa, 2023). From the students' perspective, both domestic and international learners face obstacles, with international students specifically reporting language-related issues in classrooms where their peers have different levels of English proficiency (Galloway & Curle, 2022). From the teachers' viewpoint, since these programs are frequently implemented through top-down policies, various hurdles need to be addressed. One issue is the lack of structured support for EMI educators, as EMI training in Japan has received minimal attention (Uehara & Kojima, 2021).

Furthermore, the ideology of English-only creates difficulties in EMI practices. Although a small number of elite universities in Japan emphasize linguistic and cultural diversity in their policies, the majority still maintain an English-only approach (Qiu, Zheng, & Liu, 2022).

English as a lingua franca is a term that describes:

[...] the function of English as a contact language in communications involving primarily non-native users of English from various international, multilingual and heterogeneous settings. Each user brings a variety of English that he or she is most familiar and comfortable with and employs various strategies to communicate effectively. (Sifakis & Tsantila, 2018, p. 1)

Sifakis and Tsantila (2018) point out that research in ELF and WE has significantly advanced our understanding of the structures, functions, and communication skills of non-native speakers of English. As awareness of the fluidity and unbounded nature of ELF interactions grew, the need to redefine ELF within a more realistic and authentic framework of translanguaging and multilingualism became central.

In his study on the status of ELF in Japan, D'Angelo (2020) concludes:

ELF makes more sense for Japan than WE, as in Japan the main uses of English are in international rather than intra-national domains. ELF can give Japanese users more confidence in their English-medium interactions, as it does not privilege native speakers, and can raise awareness that each user's unique "idiolect" is what they naturally bring to any ELF situation. (p. 292)

Aizawa, Rose, McKinley, and Thompson (2023) compared the content learning outcomes between Japanese and English Medium Instruction (JMI and EMI) for students studying Chemistry. The quantitative data showed no substantial overall differences in the obtained results between EMI and JMI students. It

was emphasized that the advantages of EMI may not always have to be studied in relation to academic progress compared to teaching in the native language. Instead, the benefits of EMI should be studied independently, considering various possible results and risks (Aizawa et al., 2023).

Some studies are devoted to teaching traditional Japanese culture (Groff, 2020) and Japanese linguistics (Hiroyuki, 2020) through English. Despite much controversy, researchers have also studied the use of English in L2 or L3 learning. In particular, the use of English in teaching JFL was studied by Luchenko et al. (2024a, 2024b), Mitarai and Kelava (2021), Muliadi and Haristiani (2020), Putu Dewi Merlyna (2023), and Turnbull (2018).

Our previous research conducted among NNSTs of Japanese showed that over 40% of all JFL classrooms taught by NNSTs were multilingual (Luchenko & Kovinko, 2024). It also revealed that in these multilingual JFL classes, NNSTs used English 26.14% more than in non-multilingual JFL classrooms (Luchenko et al., 2024b).

This article examines the utilization of English by NSTs and seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are NSTs' preferences for the primary language of instruction, and how are they different from those of NNSTs?

RQ2: To what extent do NSTs use English in JFL classrooms, and how does this compare to usage by NNSTs?

RQ3: What are NSTs' beliefs on the primary instructional language and the use of English in particular?

Methodology

Participants

It was assumed that Japanese language teachers, both native and non-native, used English differently in their teaching practice, and this assumption was included in two of the research questions in this article. We had to compare the preference for the primary languages and the extent to which native and non-native Japanese language teachers use English in their classrooms. To address these questions, the results of the questionnaire conducted among NNSTs (Luchenko et al., 2024b) were also used for further analyses. The sample for this study consists of 256 Japanese NSTs from 39 countries: 131 taught abroad in predominantly non-Anglophone countries and 125 taught in Japan. These teachers were employed at officially registered Japanese language institutions across various educational stages in the following countries and regions around the world: Austria, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Czech Republic,

Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam (The Japan Foundation, 2021).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilized a questionnaire to gather the necessary data to address the research questions. The questionnaire was distributed to Japanese-language institutions globally via official email addresses (The Japan Foundation, 2021). Furthermore, the survey invitation was shared with JFL teachers through professional networking groups on Facebook. Each email included a cover letter in Japanese and English explaining the research objectives and ensuring anonymity. Two separate links for Google Forms or Jotform (in the case of China) were provided for NSTs and NNSTs of Japanese. The questionnaire included questions in Japanese for NSTs and in both Japanese and English for NNSTs. All JFL teachers, regardless of whether they employed English or not in their practice, were invited to participate.

In our study, we selected countries where most of the population speaks a native language other than English. Stated otherwise, countries where English is the primary language were not included in our analysis. The pilot survey was created and carried out in August 2023 at the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa, Japan. It was developed after extensive discussions with Japanese language experts at the institute and elsewhere. The main data collection from NSTs lasted six months, from September 13, 2023, to March 10, 2024.

The questionnaire, designed for NSTs of Japanese, consisted of 35 questions and included a comments section at the end (see Appendix A). To address the RQs of this article, we selected eight questions for the analysis (see Appendix B). The article uses both quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis. For the quantitative analysis, the MS Excel statistical program was used to calculate the data and apply descriptive statistics, which helped to summarize and present the findings. The final section of the questionnaire, where teachers were asked to share their thoughts and experiences on the topic, provided data for the qualitative analysis in which subjective interpretation was applied. A total of 74 comments from native Japanese teachers in the corresponding field of the questionnaire were received and analyzed through the content analysis relevant to the article's overall purpose. Due to this analysis, we selected 31 comments about the Japanese teachers' practice, shedding light on the background of Japanese language practice, the choice of instructional

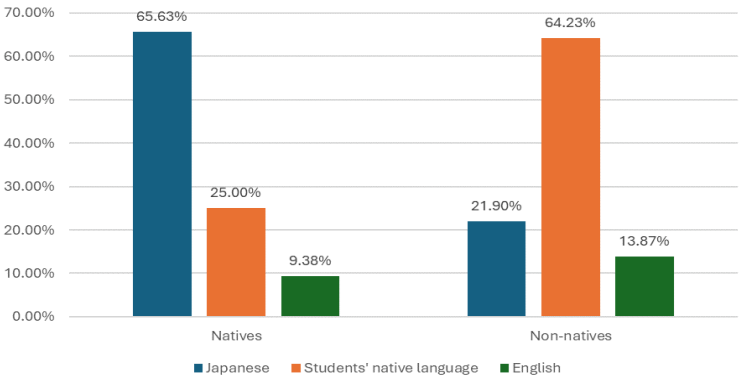
language, and the preference for using English, which cannot be explained solely by qualitative results.

Results

The NSTs’ Preference for the Primary Language of Instruction

The survey asked the participants to specify the primary language of instruction used in their Japanese language classrooms (see question 4 in Appendix B). According to the survey results among NSTs, most teachers (65.63%, $N = 168$) indicated that the main language of instruction was the target Japanese language. On the other hand, one-fourth (25.00%, $N = 64$) of the respondents stated that it was their students’ L1, while only 9.38% ($N = 24$) mentioned English as the main language of instruction. The comparison of these findings with the previous results for the NNSTs of Japanese (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b) can be seen in Figure 1. A closer look at the comparison shows that the use of Japanese as a mother tongue by NSTs is almost the same as the use of a native language by NNSTs as the primary language of instruction. At the same time, the extent to which the NSTs of Japanese use students’ native language is close to the extent to which NNSTs use Japanese during the JFL lesson, and the difference is only 3.10%. The difference increases (by 4.49%) when using English as the primary language of instruction but cannot be considered significant.

Figure 1
The Comparison of the Primary Language of Instruction Used in Classes of the Native ($N = 256$) and Non-native Japanese Teachers ($N = 274$)

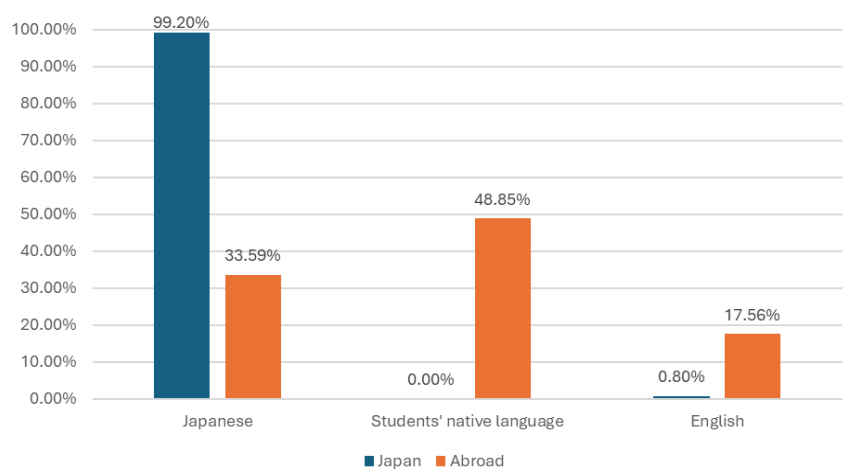


We can state that the JFL teachers’ native language was mostly the primary language of instruction, regardless of whether they were NSTs or NNSTs. However, we should note that only 2.19% of NNSTs stated they had moved abroad and taught Japanese there, so most of them teach in JFL classrooms in their home country, where they have a common native language with most of their students (Luchenko & Kovinko, 2024).

After analyzing the NSTs’ responses, we obtained significantly different results. Out of the total sample size of 256, 51.17% ($N = 131$) taught abroad, while 48.83% ($N = 125$) taught in Japan. This almost equal split in our NSTs’ sample allowed further analysis. We hypothesized that the preference for the primary language of instruction could correlate with these variables.

Figure 2 illustrates the variance in NSTs’ language preference for instruction based on their teaching location—Japan or abroad. Almost all the NSTs teaching in Japan opted for Japanese as their primary instructional language (99.20%, $N = 124$), while nearly half of the NSTs teaching abroad chose students’ native language (48.85%, $N = 64$). Only one-third of the NSTs teaching abroad preferred Japanese (33.59%, $N = 44$), and 17.56% ($N = 23$) opted for English as an instructional language.

Figure 2
The Comparison of the Primary Languages of Instruction Used in Classes of the NSTs Teaching in Japan ($N = 125$) and Abroad ($N = 131$)



This notable distinction motivated us to investigate further. Table 1 displays the countries where the NSTs taught and the primary languages of instruction they used in JFL classrooms (see question 5 in Appendix B). Out of the 64

NSTs, almost one-third used Spanish (Catalan ($N = 1$) and Galician ($N = 1$) were included) in their teaching, followed by German and French in terms of frequency of usage.

Table 1

The NSTs' Use of Students' LI and the Countries of Teaching

Students' native languages	%	Country of teaching	N of NSTs
Spanish/Catalan/Galician	29.69	Spain	17
		Colombia	1
		Mexico	1
German	20.31	Germany	11
		Austria	1
		Switzerland	1
French	17.19	France	11
Swedish	4.69	Sweden	3
Italian	3.13	Italy	2
Korean	3.13	South Korea	2
Portuguese	3.13	Portugal	1
		Brazil	1
Uzbek	3.13	Uzbekistan	2
Chinese	1.56	Taiwan	1
Czech/Slovak	1.56	Czech Republic	1
Dutch	1.56	The Netherlands	1
Estonian	1.56	Estonia	1
Finnish	1.56	Finland	1
Hungarian	1.56	Hungary	1
Khmer	1.56	Cambodia	1
Norwegian	1.56	Norway	1
Polish	1.56	Poland	1
Vietnamese	1.56	Vietnam	1

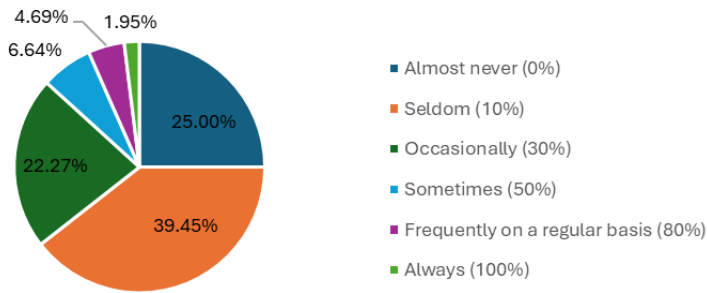
Note. $N = 64$.

The Extent to Which NSTs Use English

We were fully aware that the question about the primary language of instruction used was not intended to give a detailed picture of the state of ELF in Japanese language classrooms. Instead, we used it to determine teachers' overall preferences. In Japanese classrooms, English is not strategically used as the main instructional language but is viewed as an additional form of support.

To conduct a more detailed investigation, we asked all the participants about their experience with English as an instructional language, namely, to provide an approximate numerical value of how frequently they used it in the teaching process (Figure 3). The teachers self-assessed the extent to which they used English and reported it approximately. For the convenience of future data presentation, the respondents were asked to describe their beliefs in numerical value (see question 6 in Appendix B). However, if teachers wanted to provide more explanations on actual situations, the comment section at the end of the questionnaire gave them more freedom.

Figure 3
The Extent to Which English is Used in the JFL Classroom by the Japanese NSTs (N = 256)

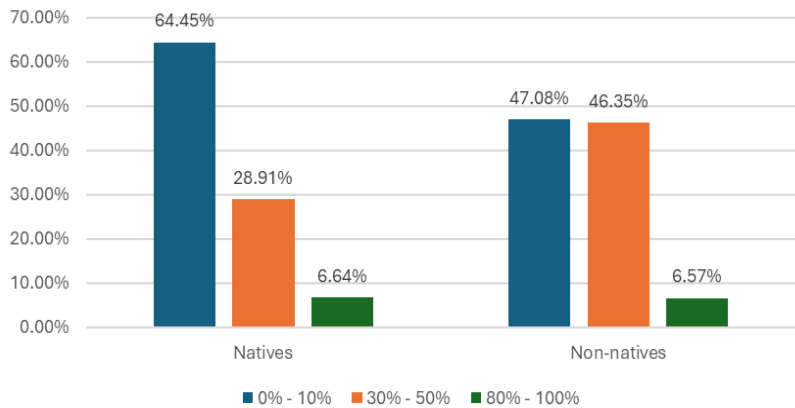


Even though most NSTs initially indicated that Japanese was the main language of instruction, further investigation uncovered the significant role of English as a medium language. Over one-third of the respondents (35.55%, $N = 91$) stated that English was used for 30%–100% of the instructional time in their JFL classrooms. Most of them (28.91%, $N = 74$) reported that English was used occasionally or sometimes, falling into the 30%–50% of instructional time category; however, only a small percentage (6.64%, $N = 17$) claimed that English was frequently or always used (80%–100%).

Since the academic subject under consideration was JFL, we believe that the use of English as the language of instruction might be partial. Japanese NSTs can engage students in multilingual practice, switching between Japanese, students' L1, and English. Therefore, for this research, a 30% utilization could be deemed sufficient. When discussing the use of English in JFL classrooms, the use of English from 30% to 100% of instructional time will be considered significant.

The comparison with the NNSTs’ results of English usage (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b) shows that the NNSTs employed English in JFL classrooms by 17.37% more than the NSTs in the range from 30% to 100% of instructional time (Figure 4). The results also show that a higher percentage of the NSTs used English minimally (0%–10%), whereas the NNSTs’ results are more evenly distributed between the minimal and moderate use (30%–50%). The use of English to a high extent (80%–100%) is similar and relatively low for both groups.

Figure 4
The Comparison of the Extent to Which English is Used in the JFL Classroom by the Native (N = 256) and Non-Native Japanese Teachers (N = 274)



Having analyzed the practices of NSTs teaching abroad and in Japan separately, we better understood when respondents tend to use English more often (Table 2). The results show that English was used by 40.46% ($N = 53$) of NSTs teaching abroad from 30% to 100% of instructional time during the lesson, which is 10.06% more frequently than by NSTs teaching in Japan (30.40%, $N = 38$).

Table 2
The Degree to Which English is Used by the NSTs Teaching in Japan and Abroad

Frequency of use	Teaching in Japan		Teaching abroad	
	N	%	N	%
Almost never (0%)	33	26.40	31	23.66
Seldom (10%)	54	43.20	47	35.88
Occasionally (30%)	32	25.60	25	19.08

Table 2 continued

Frequency of use	Teaching in Japan		Teaching abroad	
	N	%	N	%
Sometimes (50%)	5	4.00	12	9.16
Frequently on a regular basis (80%)	1	0.80	11	8.40
Always (100%)	–	–	5	3.82
Total	125	100.00	131	100.00

Note. N = 256.

To gain a deeper understanding of the actual English language situation in JFL classrooms, we analyzed the groups with different primary languages of instruction separately (Table 3). The results showed that among those participants who stated Japanese as the primary language of instruction, almost one-third of the teachers (30.95%, N = 84) used English as an additional language from 30% to 50% of the instructional time. Almost one-fourth of the respondents (23.44%, N = 15) who stated students' native language as the primary language of instruction used English for additional help to the same degree. The presence of an entirely English-based learning environment in JFL classrooms, where English was stated as the primary language of instruction, could not be verified. English was used by 29.17% of the participants (N = 7) for 30% to 50% of instructional time.

Table 3
The Degree to Which English is Used by the NSTs with Different Preferences for Primary Languages of Instruction

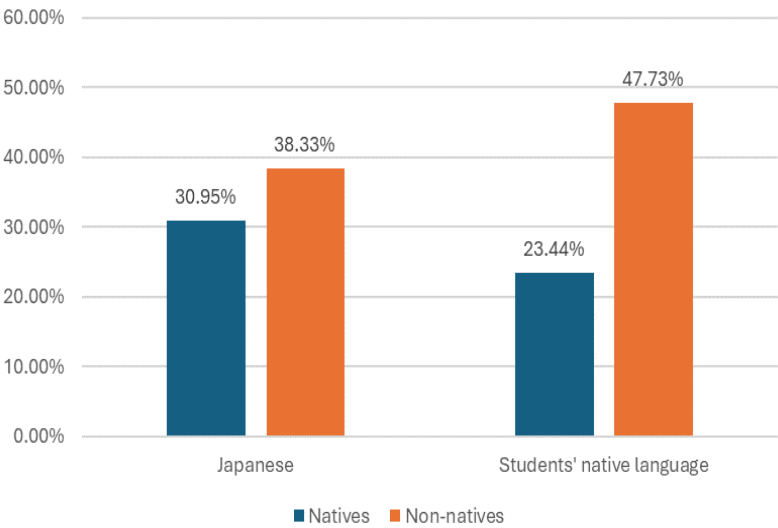
Frequency of use	Japanese		Students' native language		English	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Almost never (0%)	47	27.98	17	26.56	–	–
Seldom (10%)	69	41.07	32	50.00	–	–
Occasionally (30%)	45	26.78	11	17.19	1	4.17
Sometimes (50%)	7	4.17	4	6.25	6	25.00
Frequently on a regular basis (80%)	–	–	–	–	12	50.00
Always (100%)	–	–	–	–	5	20.83
Total	168	100.00	64	100.00	24	100.00

Note. N = 256.

Our research revealed that it is common practice for NSTs to translate or code-switch between Japanese, students' native languages and English in JFL classrooms. In this sense, the results coincide with those of the NNSTs of Japanese (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b). However, the difference is not significant for those

respondents who stated Japanese as the primary language of instruction—the NNSTs use English 7.38% more frequently than NSTs (Figure 5). A more significant difference was observed for the respondents who used students’ native language as their primary language of instruction and constituted 24.29% more for the NNSTs than for the NSTs.

Figure 5
The Comparison of the Extent to Which English is Used in Classes of the Native (N = 256) and Non-Native Japanese Teachers (N = 274)



Considering that instructional language also includes using Japanese–English textbooks or additional teaching materials, we asked the participants if they used them in JFL classrooms (see question 7 in Appendix B). As a result, 53.90% ($N = 138$) of the respondents answered positively. This is very close to the data received from the NNSTs—56.57% (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b).

Interestingly, our findings show that 43.03% ($N = 71$) of those who stated that they “almost never” or “seldom” employed English in their JFL classroom used Japanese–English textbooks in their practice. The result is very close to that received from the analysis of NNSTs’ practice previously—44.19% (cf. Luchenko et al., 2024b).

If we consider the NSTs’ data on the “passive” use of Japanese–English textbooks and add them to those who stated the “active” oral use of English in JFL classrooms, the total degree of employing English will increase to 63.28%. For the NNSTs of Japanese, the result will be 73.72%.

The NSTs' Beliefs on the Topic of the Primary Language of Instruction and the Use of English

The decision to include the following subsections was based on the recurring key themes identified through a content analysis of respondents' comments. The qualitative analysis was performed at the sentence level. NSTs' replies were translated into English and reviewed multiple times, focusing on data relevant to the research questions while excluding unrelated information. The subsections reflect core areas of concern among NSTs. Subsection "Prerequisites for Teaching Effectively" emerged from reflections on essential skills and knowledge. The following subsection on teaching methods highlights NSTs' preferences for direct or indirect approaches based on context. Subsection "English as a Lingua Franca" addresses its role in multilingual settings, particularly outside Japan. Finally, subsection "Emphasis on the Result of Teaching" highlights how teachers ensure students apply their learning in practical ways beyond the classroom.

Prerequisites for Teaching Effectively

The respondents were enthusiastic about sharing their beliefs (almost every third NST left a comment), and many were keen to learn about the study's results.

The respondents expressed their beliefs on possible differences in teaching by NSTs and NNSTs. One comment addresses the challenges JFL teachers face, pointing out that some native speakers may lack broader language awareness or have limited perspectives:

I am sometimes surprised when Japanese language teachers assert, "Such an expression does not exist in Japanese." The expression might exist, but the teacher is unaware of it, reflecting a narrow perspective shaped by their limited experience as native speakers.

The respondent continued with concerns that some NNSTs might convey incorrect or inappropriate Japanese language usage and felt that this shows a lack of effort in teaching Japanese and viewed this as a serious issue. We can say that the author of the comment emphasized the importance of being open-minded and knowledgeable about different linguistic nuances and cultural contexts when teaching or learning the Japanese language.

The respondents shared their diverse experiences, beginning with the training courses. In some courses, they were taught to use the direct teaching method, while in others they were taught the indirect teaching method. One respondent mentioned "having been taught to use English as little as possible"

at a Japanese language teacher training course. Since more than half of the students nowadays do not speak English at their JFL school, this respondent suggested “to create a separate class for those who can speak the language when providing instruction in English.”

Another participant who uses English as the primary language of instruction while teaching abroad mentioned receiving education on two methods:

Although I specialized in Sino-Japanese history in a graduate school and was not a linguistics major, I have taught Japanese in China and Finland after taking Japanese language teacher training courses on direct and indirect methods and passing the Japanese Language Teaching Proficiency Test.

One respondent discussed the varied language learning experiences from students’ perspectives, emphasizing the differences between those learning Japanese in an immersive language environment and those studying it outside of such an environment:

The situation differs for those studying Japanese in Japan versus abroad. Students in Japan can use Japanese daily, while those abroad primarily use it in specific contexts. As a teacher, I would choose a method that minimizes reliance on English or other intermediary languages for students learning abroad.

However, our quantitative results revealed the opposite tendency: NSTs teaching abroad tend to use English more frequently than those teaching in Japan.

Preference for Direct or Indirect Teaching Methods

One participant who occasionally used English in a JFL class teaching abroad believed that “in Japanese language classes in Japan, ELF is used most of the time, especially at the beginner and intermediate levels.” The results of our qualitative study revealed a preference for the direct method among the NSTs who teach in Japan. The following comment can elucidate this situation: “Japanese language schools in Japan accept international students of various nationalities. Therefore, since English is not always the lingua franca, many aspiring Japanese language teachers take training courses to learn the art of teaching Japanese using the direct method.” Another respondent confirmed that language schools in Japan mostly avoid using the indirect method: “When teaching Japanese at a Japanese language school, English is rarely used. Many schools adopt the direct method.” Several other participants supported the preference for using a direct method (teaching in Japanese) for non-English speakers.

Among the NSTs, some respondents advocated using students' native language as a medium of instruction. One teacher reflected on their previous experience as a student of a foreign language:

English is spreading as a global lingua franca, but I believe it is better to use the learner's native language when possible. I struggled while learning Portuguese without any intermediary language, making the lessons difficult to understand, especially at the beginner level.

The idea of employing students' L1 for instructions depending on the level of Japanese taught was supported by the following comment:

For total beginners, I give simple explanations in Japanese, and when it becomes complicated, I switch to my students' language [Spanish]. From the end of the A2 level, I reduce the use of their language, and at the B1 level, I speak only Japanese.

According to the data discussed previously, Spanish emerged as the predominant primary language of instruction within the domain of "students' native language" in the JFL classroom. The following observation provided valuable insight into the prevailing language dynamics within the educational university setting:

I try to take as many opportunities as possible to speak in Japanese, but I teach complex grammar explanations in Spanish. I majored in Spanish at a university in Japan, so I believe I can use my knowledge of the Spanish language to teach effectively.

German also appeared to be one of the most frequently used instructional languages preferred by the NSTs teaching abroad. The following comment sheds more light on its status: "In my context, all of my students (foreigners, residents, or international students) speak German, so I do not feel any need to use English as a third language." This was supported by another experience: "Many of my students are foreigners and study all subjects in German using German textbooks. They also study Japanese in German, which works without problems." However, the respondents mentioned using other languages for comparison purposes.

One university teacher from Poland stated that "teaching methods vary between the first three years of bachelor's programs and the first and second years of master's programs." Therefore, they advised "studying these methods separately, depending on the difficulty level of learning Japanese." However,

a previous study on the topic of English usage among NNSTs showed that the use of English did not align with this benchmark (Luchenko et al., 2024a).

One respondent teaching Japanese to high school students in France advocated for the direct method for intermediate–advanced levels and the abundant use of students’ native language for elementary students. This situation was confirmed by another NST from France teaching in a high school who stated the high requirements for students’ Japanese level, which was supposed to be JLPT Level 1, as a prerequisite for successfully passing their graduation exam. This attitude is grounded in the perception that Japanese was not even considered the second foreign language but was rather treated as the first, with the same demands imposed on students. Therefore, teaching is conducted exclusively in Japanese without the use of English.

English as a Lingua Franca

One of the NSTs teaching abroad mentioned the frequent use of English in class, despite only a few students being native English speakers, and provided comments about the multilingual situation in Europe. The following comment was received from a participant in Luxembourg who used English as the primary language of instruction: “The majority of students come from various European countries, with only a few being native English speakers. For French-speaking students, I also provide some explanations in French and use some French teaching materials.”

The participants mentioned that “using English might be acceptable” in a multilingual environment. One respondent continued to occasionally use English as a medium, even after relocating to a non-Anglophone country (the UAE):

I have taught Japanese to non-native English speakers for the last five years, after many years of teaching native English speakers in the USA. These non-native English speakers’ mother tongue is mainly Arabic, but English is used as the medium of instruction.

The respondents differed in their opinions on the status of English as a medium for instruction. Some mentioned that “English has become too much of a standard,” while others emphasized that “in Europe, many languages other than English are used” for instruction. Several respondents expressed surprise upon discovering that Japanese could be taught using English as a medium of instruction. One participant who taught in Japan stated:

I also studied foreign language teaching methods abroad, but even then, it was a direct method, not a method considered from an English perspective.

Therefore, I do not feel the need to use English as a medium of instruction when I am using the local language.

There were also some concerns about the use of English in JFL classrooms. One participant who taught in Japan shared specific examples from their experience and concluded that “it is important for teachers to understand the advantages of the direct method and use the indirect method when necessary. However, beginning teachers may struggle to use this approach appropriately, so focusing on the direct method can ensure the quality of language acquisition.”

The respondents shared their experiences about balancing their use of English in class. One participant who taught abroad and occasionally used English explained that students often preferred to receive explanations in English when they had a good command of the language. However, even when this was not the case, the teacher preferred to strategically use English to explain words or give instructions, prioritizing Japanese conversation in the Vietnamese class and encouraging the Bangladeshi students to speak Japanese as much as possible due to their proficiency in English.

Emphasis on the Result of Teaching

One respondent expressed a valid concern about the discrepancy between making students understand the subject in class and ensuring they can actively use the language outside the classroom. Moreover, being an experienced teacher with thirty years of experience, the respondent stated that they had “never worked with a particular focus on teaching methods.”

I feel that there is too much emphasis on teacher instruction. The teacher's intention to “make students understand” and the students' intention to learn are not the same. Even if students understand instructions provided in English during the lesson, it does not necessarily mean they have truly learned the material.

We also noticed that some respondents expressed flexibility in choosing the teaching method depending on the country where they teach. Therefore, the teaching method can be considered not just a personal preference but also a requirement of the particular location.

In my teaching environment, I use German frequently because all of my learners are native German speakers or at least students who can study in German. In other situations, such as teaching in different countries, I would use the direct method or sometimes English.

Teachers also try to listen to students' wishes and tailor their teaching to their needs. One respondent from Norway with abundant experience who uses English on a regular basis stated: "I have experience with large classes, small groups, and private lessons, and I am constantly reminded that there are different teaching methods that may or may not suit different people." Another respondent teaching in Vietnam mentioned, "when Japanese was being taught in English, learners said that what they wanted to hear from the teacher was not English, but Japanese," as "when learning Japanese, the main focus is Japanese."

The focus on learners' outcomes and flexibility in choosing teaching methods can be noted in the following comment from a teacher in Thailand who occasionally uses English in JFL classes:

Whether you teach using the direct method or an intermediary language, the important thing is for learners to understand and speak correctly. Other people's arguments about agreeing or disagreeing are meaningless. If teachers are competent and learning outcomes are maximized, that is the best approach.

Another respondent, teaching in a language school in Japan, believed that leveraging students' existing knowledge of English in Japanese language education could significantly enhance their learning experience and overall progress. Overcoming the obstacles posed by language schools' insistence on the direct method might lead to more effective and efficient language education.

Most language school students have already studied English as a second language. Not utilizing their existing knowledge of English in Japanese language education is a waste of time. The school's insistence on the direct method may be the biggest obstacle.

One "veteran" teacher from Japan supported this opinion, emphasizing that it is not important whether teachers use the student's native language or English; both will suffice as long as "students learn more effectively by utilizing their existing knowledge" and "then output it in the final target language—Japanese." The respondent argues that instruction using an intermediary language is effective only when the teacher can appropriately control the situations in which English (the intermediary language) and Japanese are used.

Overall, the respondents unanimously agreed that flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods are essential. Recognizing that individuals have unique learning needs and preferences underscores the importance of tailoring instruction to suit different students. This highlights the significance of being open and responsive to various teaching approaches to effectively reach and engage all learners.

Limitations

Despite a cover letter inviting all JFL teachers to participate regardless of their use of English in JFL classrooms, the voluntary nature of the survey suggests that the respondents may have been more motivated than other teachers, potentially affecting the results. Furthermore, since the survey was conducted in non-Anglophone countries, the sample may not accurately represent the entire population of Japanese NSTs. Therefore, the study's results should be interpreted with this limitation.

Another limitation of the study is that almost all the comments were translated by the authors from Japanese to English, which may have potentially introduced some translation bias or inaccuracies. Although the English translation was also proofread by a native Japanese speaker with a PhD degree in philology, the short format of comments alongside the predominantly abbreviated style of presenting them could not allow us to grasp the subtle nuances of teachers' beliefs. If follow-up interviews had been conducted, they might have provided an in-depth understanding.

Further examination of Japanese NSTs' English proficiency level and students' Japanese proficiency can provide valuable insights into how teaching methods and language choices interact.

Conclusions

The quantitative analysis of the survey revealed that the vast majority of the NSTs primarily use Japanese as the language of instruction in their classrooms, followed by a significant number of the NSTs using the students' first language and a smaller percentage using English. These findings are consistent with the previous results for the NNSTs of Japanese, indicating similar patterns in the use of teachers' native language as a language of instruction. The differences in the extent of using English as the primary language of instruction between the NSTs and NNSTs are minimal and not considered significant.

Further study revealed that English plays a significant role as a medium language in JFL classrooms. Despite Japanese being identified as the primary language of instruction in NSTs' classrooms, it was found that English was used extensively during instructional time, explicitly indicating a general shift from a monolingual to a multilingual approach. The research suggests that NSTs may utilize multilingual practices (translanguaging and code-switching) on a regular basis, incorporating Japanese, students' native languages, and English

into the classroom. However, the comparison of the extent to which the NSTs and NNSTs used English as additional help in JFL classrooms revealed that the NNSTs employed it much more frequently than the NSTs.

The findings also indicate a notable difference in the use of English by NSTs teaching abroad compared to those teaching in Japan, with a higher percentage of NSTs teaching abroad using English for instructional purposes. This suggests that factors such as classroom context, student proficiency, and educational environment may influence the extent to which English is used during lessons. These results provide valuable insights for developing language teaching methodologies in JFL classrooms.

The results of the qualitative study revealed that the respondents emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods. They acknowledged that individual learning needs and preferences vary, highlighting the necessity of customizing instruction to different students. This reinforces the need for being open and responsive to diverse teaching strategies to effectively engage all learners.

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Appendix A

Data Availability

The entire Google Forms questionnaire is available online (in Japanese) at the following link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14677681>

Appendix B

**Questions from the Questionnaire Used for the Analysis
in this Article
(Translated from Japanese)**

1. What is your native language?
2. What is your country of origin?
3. What country do you teach in?
4. What is the primary language of instruction?
 - Japanese
 - Students' native language (in this case, the next question was asked to specify it)
 - English
5. What language is used as a mother tongue?
6. Do you use indirect teaching methods using English?
 - 0% – Almost never
 - 10% – Seldom
 - 30% – Occasionally (e.g., to explain words and grammar patterns)
 - 50% – Sometimes (to the same extent as Japanese)
 - 80% – Frequently, on a regular basis
 - 100% – Always
7. Do you use Japanese-English textbooks or supplementary teaching materials?
 - Yes (in this case, the next question was asked to specify it)
 - No
8. We would like to hear if you have any comments on the questionnaire.



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Resolution of English Pronouns by Vietnamese EFL Learners

Abstract

Successful discourse comprehension involves accurate interpretation of anaphoric expressions such as pronouns (e.g., *he*, *him*) and reflexives (e.g., *himself*, *herself*), which is thought to be structurally constrained under the Binding theory. Previous research has shown that L2 learners whose L1 anaphors are resolved under structural constraints different from those of the L2 encounter greater difficulty interpreting L2 anaphoric expressions. This study explores Vietnamese EFL learners' knowledge of the Binding Principles (Chomsky, 1981) and their applications in anaphora resolution. Forty-five intermediate and advanced Vietnamese EFL learners completed a forced-choice anaphora test consisting of 24 items. Results reveal that the advanced learners are more accurate in selecting suitable antecedents for both pronouns and reflexives. However, the intermediate learners face challenges, particularly in interpreting pronouns, performing significantly worse than the advanced learners. The findings prompt discussions regarding the implications of the Binding Principles and the potential influence of pragmatic knowledge, suggesting the need for further investigations incorporating pragmatic aspects.

Keywords: pronoun interpretation, Vietnamese EFL learners, Binding Principles

Understanding language depends greatly on the language user's ability to interpret referential dependencies with accuracy. One key component in a referential dependency is an anaphor (i.e., pronouns and reflexives), which is

defined as an element used later in discourse to refer to an entity previously introduced. An example is given in (1) below to illustrate the phenomenon of a referential dependency with the anaphor *she*.

- (1) At the party, Mary_i was star-struck by John. She_i was not that easy to impress usually.

In (1), the pronoun *she* in the second sentence is used anaphorically, referring to the NP *Mary* mentioned in the previous discourse. *Mary* is the antecedent to the anaphor *she*. Pronoun interpretation in this case is seemingly effortless and is, in fact, crucial for the comprehension of those sentences. If the second sentence in (1) is uttered without a given context or any non-verbal gestures, it is unlikely that the hearer can identify the reference of the pronoun *she*. Therefore, successful communication depends on the speaker's clear establishment of the antecedent and the listener's ability to discern the co-reference between the anaphor and its antecedent.

A considerable number of studies have investigated how speakers process anaphoric dependencies across various contexts. Some researchers have emphasized the role of semantic cues (e.g., Arnold, 2001; Nguyen, 2017) and syntactic cues (e.g., Choi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2015) in facilitating anaphora resolution. Additionally, extensive research has explored the impact of referential dependency length on the interpretation of anaphoric ties (e.g., Joseph et al., 2015; White, 1998). For instance, Joseph et al. (2015) observed that children experience no significant processing difficulties when interpreting anaphors, even when the antecedents are located several clauses away.

Many of the studies mentioned above adopt Chomsky's (1981) Binding Theory as their theoretical framework, which outlines the structural constraints necessary for interpreting anaphors. According to this framework, knowledge of the Binding Principles enables language users to accurately select the correct antecedent from among multiple candidates. Recently, research has increasingly focused on whether EFL and ESL learners possess implicit knowledge of these principles and whether they apply them when interpreting English anaphors (Felser & Cunnings, 2012; Rago et al., 2011). In this context, implicit knowledge refers to learners' ability to resolve anaphora by applying the Binding Principles. This concept of implicit knowledge will also be central to the present study.

Despite considerable research, the ability of non-native English speakers to accurately comprehend anaphoric dependencies remains a subject of ongoing debate, as findings across studies have been inconsistent. For instance, Finer and Broselow (1985) examined how Korean EFL learners interpret English reflexives. In Korean, reflexive interpretation is flexible, allowing both local (same clause) and non-local (different clause) antecedents. However, the Korean participants in their study were able to interpret English reflexives in line

with the Binding Principles, suggesting that they could adjust to the syntactic constraints of English. Similarly, Rago et al. (2011) conducted a comparable study with Korean EFL learners and found that participants at varying proficiency levels successfully acquired complex syntactic properties such as the Binding Principles, overcoming first language transfer and achieving near-native performance.

However, other studies highlight potential difficulties in anaphora resolution. For instance, Felser et al. (2009), using eye-tracking technology, examined the online processing of anaphora resolution among Japanese EFL learners. They found that although the participants adhered to the Binding Principles when interpreting anaphors, they were still prone to distraction by competitors that violated these principles. These findings suggest that while learners may internalize the rules, interference from competing elements can impact real-time processing.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that the knowledge of the Binding Principles, though crucial for understanding discourse, cannot be explicitly taught (White, 1995). Nonetheless, mastery of anaphora resolution is essential, as it is commonly tested in standardized English exams (Cohen & Upton, 2006; MacMillan, 2007). Despite a substantial body of cross-linguistic studies, research on Vietnamese remains relatively sparse. Studies by Ivan and Bui (2019) and Bui (2019) explored how native Vietnamese speakers interpret Vietnamese pronouns and reflexives, revealing that Vietnamese syntax often allows deviations from Chomsky's (1981) Binding Principles. However, little is understood about how Vietnamese EFL learners grasp the Binding Principles in English or process English anaphors. Given the pivotal role of anaphora resolution in discourse comprehension, addressing this gap in research is crucial.

This study aims to address the gap in the literature concerning Vietnamese EFL learners' understanding of the English Binding Principles and their ability to resolve anaphora. It seeks to determine whether these learners possess knowledge of English Binding Theory and can effectively apply it to interpret reflexives and pronouns. Additionally, the study considers learners at different proficiency levels to explore how proficiency interacts with their anaphora resolution skills. To bridge this research gap, the following questions will be investigated:

1. Do Vietnamese EFL learners possess knowledge of the Binding Principle A in the resolution of English reflexives?
2. Do Vietnamese EFL learners possess knowledge of the Binding Principle B in the resolution of English pronouns?
3. To what extent can Vietnamese EFL learners of different levels of proficiency accurately interpret English pronouns and reflexives?

To investigate the above research questions, this study utilized an anaphora resolution test to assess participants' ability to resolve pronouns and reflexives. The test results were analyzed across varying proficiency levels to examine the potential interaction between EFL learners' language proficiency and their knowledge of English Binding Principles. Previous research has shown that EFL learners can effectively assign antecedents to reflexives and pronouns, successfully differentiating between local and non-local options, even when their L1 and L2 exhibit structural differences. Bui's (2019) doctoral dissertation, focusing on Vietnamese learners, highlighted a preference among native Vietnamese speakers for non-local antecedents in pronoun resolution. These insights guided the current study's hypotheses. It is hypothesized that Vietnamese EFL learners would perform well on the anaphora resolution test, accurately identifying antecedents for English reflexives and pronouns, reflecting their understanding of the Binding Principles.

Background Review

Binding Principles in English

Chomsky's (1981) Binding Theory, introduced in his influential work *Lectures on Government and Binding*, has played a pivotal role in the study of syntax and has inspired significant research across languages. The theory focuses on how pronouns, reflexives, and other referential expressions relate to their antecedents, establishing formal constraints to prevent ambiguity in sentences. Among its three core principles (A, B, and C), Principles A and B govern the use of reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns, respectively, drawing boundaries around their appropriate syntactic domains. These principles have been the subject of extensive debate, revision, and extension by linguists over the decades.

Binding Principle A is part of Chomsky's (1981) Binding Theory, which focuses on the behavior of reflexive pronouns. According to this principle, reflexive pronouns (e.g., *himself*, *herself*, *themselves*) must have an antecedent within the same local domain—usually the smallest clause or syntactic boundary in which the reflexive appears. Chomsky's theory posits that this constraint ensures that reflexives refer to an entity within a structurally close environment, preventing them from referring to entities outside the immediate clause. Another requirement for binding involves the anaphor being c-commanded by a co-indexed antecedent. Carnie's (2013) elaboration of the conditions for c-commanding reads "node A c-commands node B if every node dominating

A also dominates B, and neither A nor B dominates the other,” (p. 127). To illustrate the requirements, consider (2) below.

(2) Emily_j believes that Annai loves herself_{i/j*}.

In example (2), the only plausible antecedent for the reflexive *herself* is *Anna*, not the other subject, *Emily*. It is hypothesized that Binding Principle A is at work here. Although the three noun phrases (NPs) share semantic features such as gender and number, the exclusion of *Emily* as the antecedent suggests that an additional syntactic principle is guiding the interpretation of *herself*. Specifically, in (2), *Anna* serves as the most plausible antecedent of *herself* because these two NPs are in the same local domain. Conversely, *Emily* cannot serve as the antecedent for *herself* because the two NPs do not appear within the same clause, violating the clause-mate condition posited by Binding Principle A. The clause-mate distinction will hereafter be used to categorize NPs like *Emily* as non-local antecedents and NPs like *Anna* as local antecedents. The distinction shall facilitate further investigation in this study regarding participants' understanding of the Binding Principles by testing their ability to distinguish between local and non-local antecedents. Regarding the c-command requirement, it can be observed in (2) that every node that dominates *Anna* also dominates *herself* and neither of them dominates the other, which leads to the conclusion that *Anna* c-commands *herself*. Consequently, *Anna* also meets the prerequisite of c-commanding, qualifying as an antecedent for the reflexive *herself*.

Binding Principle B, on the other hand, focuses on the behavior of pronominals, highlighting that non-reflexive pronouns (e.g., *he*, *she*, *they*) must not have an antecedent within the same local domain. Instead, they must refer to an entity outside the immediate clause. This principle ensures that pronouns have disjoint reference, meaning that the pronoun and its potential antecedent cannot corefer if they appear within the same syntactic boundary (Chomsky, 1981). This principle is illustrated with the example (3) below.

(3) Emily_j believes that Annai loves her_{i*/j}.

Since the pronoun must remain free within its binding domain, *Anna* is no longer a possible antecedent for the pronoun *her*. Instead, the alternative option, *Emily*, satisfies the locality constraint by not binding the pronoun *her*, making *Emily* the appropriate antecedent for *her* in (3).

Binding Principles in Vietnamese

As previously mentioned, Ivan and Bui (2019) highlighted that Vietnamese permits violations of all three principles outlined in Binding Theory. Specifically, their study examined the use of the gender-neutral Vietnamese reflexive *mình* and the third-person singular pronoun *nó*. These violations are illustrated in the examples provided in (4):

- (4) Tom_i nói là John_j đánh mình_{i/j}.
 Tom say that John hit SELF
 ‘Tom said that John hit him/himself.’

If the example in (4) were analyzed using Binding Principle A in English, it would rule out *Tom*, a non-local NP, as the antecedent for the reflexive NP. However, unlike English, the Vietnamese reflexive *mình* can refer to both local and non-local subjects. Moreover, some native Vietnamese speakers in Bui’s (2019) study indicated that, for sentences like (4), selecting long-distance antecedents feels more natural.

Now consider (5) below.

- (5) Tom_i nói là John_j đánh nó_{i/j}.
 Tom say that John hit 3SG .
 ‘Tom said that John hit him/himself.’

Similarly, if the third person pronoun *nó* in Vietnamese were analyzed using Binding Principle B in English, its antecedent could only be *Tom*, which is a non-local NP. This is not the case, though, since *nó* can also take the local NP *John* as an antecedent. Ivan and Bui (2019) concluded that “the classic versions of Conditions A and B are grammaticized in English, whereas they operate more as preferential soft constraints in Vietnamese” (p. 50).

Bui (2019) explored how native Vietnamese speakers process pronouns in real-time when faced with multiple potential antecedents. To investigate this, she employed a self-paced reading task in four conditions, given in examples (6)—(9) below:

- (6) Multiple match
 Nhỏ Liên nói rằng nhỏ công nhân tin rằng nó làm được.
 SUB Lien say that SUB worker trust that SUB do able.
 ‘Lien. SUB said that the worker. SUB trusted her. SUB to be able to do it.’

(7) Non-local match

Bà Liên nói rằng nhỏ công nhân tin rằng bà làm được.
 HON Lien say that SUB worker trust that HON do able.
 ‘Lien. HON said that the worker. SUB trusted her. HON to be able to do it.’

(8) Local match

Bà Liên nói rằng nhỏ công nhân tin rằng nó làm được.
 HON Lien say that SUB worker trust that SUB do able.
 ‘Lien. HON said that the worker. SUB trusted her. SUB to be able to do it.’

(9) No match

Nhỏ Liên nói rằng nhỏ công nhân tin rằng bà làm được.
 SUB Lien say that SUB worker trust that HON do able.
 ‘Lien. SUB said that the worker. SUB trusted her. HON to be able to do it.’

By analyzing participants’ reading times across multiple regions, Bui (2019) observed a bias toward non-local antecedents and against local ones when Vietnamese speakers interpreted pronouns, particularly in conditions where multiple antecedents were possible, that is, the multiple match condition. The findings suggest that although Vietnamese syntax allows violations of this principle, speakers still demonstrated a degree of adherence to the Binding Principles when interpreting Vietnamese pronouns.

Previous Studies

Pronoun Interpretation by English Native Speakers

Chien and Wexler (1990) conducted a pioneering study examining young native English speakers’ understanding of the Binding Principles through three experiments. Their participants, aged two to six, were all native English speakers. The experiments featured simple, child-friendly tasks to ensure the participants could easily follow the instructions. In one experiment, the children participated in role-play with toys, responding to prompts that contained either a pronoun or a reflexive, as in (10) and (11) below.

(10) Melody wants Alice to give her a crayon.

(11) Melody wants Alice to give herself a crayon.

In examples (10) and (11), *Melody* refers to a stuffed animal present during the experiment, and *Alice* is one of the participants. According to Principle B,

in (10), *Melody* should serve as the correct antecedent for *her*. In contrast, based on Principle A, in (11), *herself* should refer to *Alice*. Chien and Wexler (1990) hypothesized that children who understood the Binding Principles would give the crayon to *Melody* when prompted with (10) and to themselves when hearing (11). The overall results from these experiments showed that by age six, children could correctly identify local antecedents for reflexives but struggled to associate pronouns with non-local NPs. In other words, the children in Chien and Wexler's (1990) study demonstrated knowledge of Principle A but appeared to allow violations of Principle B.

In response to this phenomenon, Chien and Wexler (1990) proposed several theories to explain the observed asymmetry. They initially explored the Universal Grammar—Constrained Maturation theory, suggesting that children's poorer performance compared to adults in anaphora interpretation could be attributed to developmental maturation. It remains unclear, however, why maturation would affect pronouns but not reflexives. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that children's difficulty with pronouns stemmed from their inability to recognize certain pragmatic cues, which they referred to as Principle P. This principle suggests that contextual factors can override the original Binding Principles, influencing binding decisions. When context-driven interpretations are unclear, readers may resort to random choices for antecedents. One instance where Principle P applies is accidental coreference—a scenario where two referring expressions unintentionally corefer, that is, share the same referent, as shown in (12) below.

(12) I think we came across Emma_i yesterday. Or maybe the woman_i just looked a lot like her_i.

Analyzing (12) through the lens of Binding Principle B is challenging, as the pronoun *her* should not share the same referent as the local NP *the woman*. However, the context enables readers to interpret this co-reference. Chien and Wexler (1990) argued that children, while knowing Principle B, have yet to develop this advanced pragmatic knowledge, leading them to make binding decisions without relying on it. It is noted that Principle P does not apply in sentences containing a bound variable. Thus, while Principle B governs the binding of all pronouns, Principle P is irrelevant for a pronoun that is a bound variable. If it is the case that children have knowledge of Principle B, but not Principle P, children are predicted to allow coreference in (13), but not in (14) which contains a bound variable.

(13) *Papa Wolf_i point to him_i.

(14) *Every wolf_i points to him_i.

The results of Chien and Wexler's (1990) experiment containing the above conditions support this hypothesis, suggesting that children's difficulty with pragmatic cues does not indicate a lack of understanding of Binding Principle B. What is particularly intriguing is that this pattern was also observed in subsequent studies focused on child participants (Elbourne, 2005; Reinhart, 2004). Since this study involves intermediate-level learners, who are expected to exhibit similar traits to native English-speaking children, it is anticipated that a similar asymmetry between their comprehension of English pronouns and reflexives will emerge.

Pronoun Interpretation by Non-Native Speakers

Similar trends are evident in the growing number of studies examining the ability of EFL learners from different L1 backgrounds to accurately interpret English pronouns and reflexives. However, the literature on EFL learners remains characterized by mixed results. Finer and Broselow (1985) conducted a study using picture identification with six native Korean EFL learners to investigate how their L1 influences the acquisition of English reflexives. Korean reflexive *caki*, like the Vietnamese reflexive *minh*, can take both local and non-local antecedents—contrary to what Binding Principle A allows. Therefore, it is expected that Korean speakers would be significantly influenced by their native grammar and would therefore choose both local and non-local antecedents when interpreting English anaphors, resulting in various grammatical errors. Additionally, Korean EFL learners would independently acquire knowledge of English Binding Principles, leading to fewer errors. The results obtained from the learners' responses supported the latter hypothesis. Participants showed a clear preference for local antecedents when interpreting English reflexives, indicating their ability to reset parameters and their understanding of English Binding Principles, despite the differences in their native language.

Rago et al. (2011) further supported the findings of Finer and Broselow (1985) through a truth-value judgment task (TVJT) involving 85 Korean EFL learners divided into three proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Similar to a picture identification task, the TVJT includes visual representations of sentences; however, participants were asked to determine whether a given sentence corresponds to the event depicted in the image. Their responses were then analyzed to assess their understanding of the Binding Principles. The results of Rago et al.'s study align with those of Finer and Broselow (1985), as the authors found that their participants were largely capable of accurately selecting antecedents for both reflexives and pronouns.

Expecting that L2 learners of English can adjust their L1 syntax and successfully adopt the principles of the target language, MacLaughlin (1998) conducted a study with 15 advanced Chinese and Japanese EFL learners to test their

interpretation of English reflexives. He found results similar to those of Finer and Broselow (1985) but provided a different explanation for his findings that merits attention. MacLaughlin argued that his participants not only understood the Binding Principles but also had the ability to recognize and re-evaluate the morpho-syntactic differences between English reflexives and those in Chinese and Japanese. The Chinese reflexive *ziji* and the Japanese reflexive *zibun*, much like the Vietnamese reflexive *mình*, can refer to both local and non-local NPs, which contrasts sharply with the English reflexive, constrained by Binding Principle A. Another key difference highlighted by MacLaughlin is that while the former can be expressed with just *self*, the latter always includes a pronoun, such as *her* in *herself* or *him* in *himself*. These morphological distinctions are closely linked to the syntax governing binding. Because *ziji* or *zibun* is not attached to a pronoun, they can broaden their local domain to find non-local antecedents. In contrast, an English reflexive, which is attached to a pronoun, lacks this linguistic flexibility and can only take local antecedents, aligning with Binding Principle A. Most importantly, MacLaughlin (1998) suggested that EFL learners may possess this knowledge, leading to their nearly native-like performance when interpreting English reflexives.

Drawing connections from the studies mentioned earlier, the characteristics of the Universal Grammar (UG) approach emerge. Despite the differences between participants' L1 and L2—evidenced by the violations of the Binding Principles of English that are permissible in their native languages—these subjects were still able to reset various constraints across languages and demonstrate their ability to accurately interpret English reflexives and pronouns. These findings partially support White's (2003) perspective on UG, which suggests it restricts the interlanguage grammar used by L2 learners. Specifically, the Full Access/No Transfer hypothesis, which posits that UG underpins second language acquisition, explains that learners of a second language retain access to UG, particularly in the early stages of learning. This results in a scenario where "L1 and L2 acquisition will proceed similarly and will end up at the same point" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 167).

Method

Participants

The participants in this study included 25 advanced Vietnamese EFL learners and 20 intermediate learners from a college in Ho Chi Minh City. These subjects were classified into two proficiency levels based on their performance

on an English proficiency test, which was adapted from the Quick Placement Test (Kerr et al., 2012). Following this assessment, each participant attended a private testing session with the researcher to complete the main anaphora test.

Instruments

Proficiency Test

The study utilized the Quick Placement Test developed by Macmillan Education to categorize participants into different levels within the Straightforward coursebook series (Kerr et al., 2012). This test consists of 50 multiple-choice questions that progressively increase in difficulty, ranging from beginner to advanced levels. Of these questions, 40 assess students' grammatical proficiency, while the remaining ten evaluate their vocabulary knowledge. A conversion chart is also provided to help test takers determine their proficiency levels based on their scores. For this study, individuals scoring between 34 and 39 were classified as intermediate ($N = 20$), while those who scored between 46 and 50 were categorized as advanced ($N = 25$). These criteria were established by the test designers (Kerr et al., 2012) and were effectively applied in this research.

Anaphora Test

Participants from the two proficiency groups were asked to complete a questionnaire containing 43 forced-choice questions, which included 24 anaphora test items (target items), 16 fillers, and three practice items to familiarize them with the test format. Among the anaphora questions, 12 included a reflexive, while the remaining items featured a pronoun. Each test item provided context through the first sentence, followed by a sentence that contained either a reflexive or a pronoun, concluding with a final sentence. The first sentence introduced two noun phrases or proper names that were stereotypically associated with different genders, serving as the two potential referents from which participants needed to choose in order to answer the anaphora resolution questions.

The following description outlines the construction of the test designed to evaluate participants' knowledge of the Binding Principles, utilizing and modifying materials from the studies by Sturt (2003) and Bui (2019). Within each item pair, the reflexive and the context are held constant, while the gender of the non-local noun phrase (NP) is manipulated in one item to create a gender mismatch for the interpretation of the reflexive. Similarly, the gender of the local NP is altered in test items containing a pronoun. For example, in items (15)

and (16), both scenarios revolve around a performance and include the reflexive *herself*. In (16), the two characters are named Jennifer and Alice, both of which are stereotypically female names. In contrast, in (15), Jennifer is replaced with Thomas. As a result, (15) presents a single match for the reflexive *herself*, based on the shared semantic feature of [+female]. Conversely, (16) requires participants to choose between two potential matches for the same reflexive, which can only be accurately resolved with an understanding of Binding Principle A. The same reasoning applies to items (17) and (18).

(15) Reflexive, single match (RS)

Thomas and Alice practiced days and nights for the performance. Thomas was glad that Alice taught herself how to play the guitar. The performance was praised by many.

Q: Who was taught to play the guitar? Thomas/Alice.

(16) Reflexive, double match (RD)

Jennifer and Alice were chosen to perform at the opening ceremony. Jennifer was glad that Alice taught herself how to play the guitar. The event was in two weeks.

Q: Who was taught to play the guitar? Jennifer/Alice.

(17) Pronoun, single match (PS)

George and Anna registered to be on the team together. George was sure that Anna convinced him to join against all odds. We were thankful to have them.

Q: Who got convinced to join the team? George/Anna.

(18) Pronoun, double match (PD)

We asked George and James about when they joined the tennis team. George was sure that James convinced him to join against all odds. They were truly an incredible duo.

Q: Who got convinced to join the team? George/James.

The anaphora resolution questions are structured as subject questions written in passive voice, implicitly prompting participants to choose between the local and non-local noun phrases (NPs). To mitigate the risk of participants making guesses based on repetitive patterns or becoming overly focused on the test's purpose, 16 filler items were included. These filler items, like (19), share the same structure as the anaphora test but pose questions about trivial events unrelated to the participants' ability to resolve anaphora. With the exception of the first three questions, the remaining test items are arranged throughout the test following a Latin square design.

(19) Filler

Jay and Tony were seen fighting over this girl last week. Jay said that Tony hit him quite hard on the head. I wondered if they had made it up yet.

Q: What was the reason for Jay and Tony's fight? A girl/A treasure chest.

A significant modification in this study addressed the issue noted in the research by Felser et al. (2009) and Sturt (2003), where test items with identical contexts and wording could distract participants due to their similarity. Pilot study subjects reported that encountering a test item closely resembling another caused them to double-check their understanding of the context. Although no pilot participant used this resemblance as a shortcut to interpret the test, the potential for such confusion exists. Consequently, in the current study, pairs like (19) and (20) were altered so that the opening and closing sentences differed, while the sentences containing the pronoun remained the same.

The quick placement test was conducted in a conventional classroom setting under strict supervision. After providing their consent, participants completed an online quiz on Google Forms, adapted from the quick placement test. Google Forms automatically calculated the scores, which were not shared with the participants. Following the collection of data from the selected test takers, the researchers scheduled appointments for participants to take the anaphora interpretation test via Google Forms.

Data Analysis

The Google Forms auto-grading system was utilized to evaluate the responses of qualified participants. Mean scores were calculated and categorized into the four specified conditions, excluding fillers and samples. Subsequently, a *t*-test was conducted to compare the scores for the RS and RD conditions within and across different proficiency levels. The null hypothesis for the *t*-test posited that the difference in accuracy rates between the two data groups is statistically insignificant. This procedure was similarly applied to the PS and PD conditions. A statistically significant difference in participants' scores between the single match and double match conditions would indicate a lack of knowledge of the Binding Principles. Conversely, if no significant difference is found, it would suggest that learners are capable of resolving pronouns in accordance with the Binding Principles, suggesting their available knowledge of these principles. Additionally, interactions between variables such as proficiency level, types of pronouns, and gender matching were analyzed using a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. All statistical analyses in this study were conducted using R Statistical Software v.4.0.4 (R Core Team, 2021).

Results

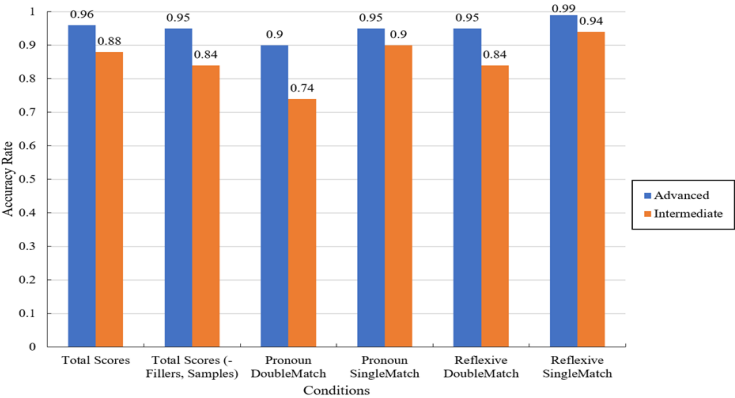
Overall Results

Overall, the intermediate group performed significantly worse than the advanced group on the anaphora test, as indicated by their total accuracy scores ($p < 0.001$) in Table 1 and Figure 1. Table 1 also reveals consistent trends in the accuracy scores across the four conditions for both proficiency groups. Notably, when two gender-matching competitors were present, the advanced group scored statistically higher than the intermediate group in both the PD ($p = .003$) and RD ($p = .005$) conditions. However, similar proficiency-related effects were less pronounced in scenarios where a gender mismatch effectively eliminated one competitor. Specifically, the 25 participants in the advanced group did not demonstrate statistically superior performance compared to the 20 participants in the intermediate group in the PS ($p = .12$) and RS ($p = .224$) conditions.

Table 1
Results of Anaphora Test for Two Proficiency Groups

Conditions	Advanced (N = 25)		Intermediate (N = 20)		p	t(45)
	M	SD	M	SD		
Pronoun, Double Match	5.4	0.645	4.45	1.191	0.003	3.21
Pronoun, Single Match	5.72	0.614	5.4	0.681	0.12	1.637
Reflexive, Double Match	5.72	0.614	5.05	0.826	0.005	3.022
Reflexive, Single Match	5.92	0.277	5.65	0.933	0.224	1.251

Figure 1
Mean Accuracy Scores (in %) by Proficiency Groups in the Anaphora Test



Proficiency Effects

In addition to comparing group performance to uncover the effect of proficiency levels on anaphora resolution, it is important to analyze the data within each group. Table 2 highlights the differences in scores for the PS and PD conditions among the advanced and intermediate groups, which may reveal whether advanced Vietnamese EFL learners have the ability to interpret pronouns and understand Binding Principle B. Specifically, while there were no significant differences in the scores of advanced participants across the two pronoun conditions ($p = .079$), it is noteworthy that intermediate participants faced significant challenges when interpreting pronouns in scenarios with multiple gender-matching NPs. This difficulty is reflected in the statistically significantly lower mean scores of the intermediate group between the PS and PD contexts ($p = .004$). These results align with findings from various studies examining pronoun resolution among English-speaking children and L2 learners below advanced proficiency levels.

Table 2
T-tests Results for Pronoun Conditions in Two Groups

Proficiency group	Pronoun, Double Match		Pronoun, Single Match		p	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Advanced ($N = 25$)	5.4	0.645	5.72	0.614	0.079	-1.796
Intermediate ($N = 20$)	4.45	1.191	5.4	0.681	0.004	-3.097

Table 3 presents the results of t-tests examining participants' scores in the RD and RS conditions related to their ability to interpret reflexives. Specifically, both advanced and intermediate participants made more errors when resolving reflexives in scenarios with a non-local and gender-matching antecedent (RD condition). However, the mean correct responses were not significantly different from those in the condition where only the local antecedent matched the reflexive in terms of gender. This trend holds true for both the advanced ($p = .523$) and intermediate ($p = .377$) groups. These findings are expected to provide insights into Vietnamese EFL learners' ability to resolve English reflexives across different proficiency levels.

Table 3
T-tests Results for Reflexive Conditions in Two Groups

Proficiency group	Reflexive, Double Match		Reflexive, Single Match		p	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Advanced ($N = 25$)	5.72	0.614	5.92	0.277	0.523	-0.643
Intermediate ($N = 20$)	5.05	0.826	5.65	0.933	0.377	-0.908

Interaction Effects

A three-way repeated measures ANOVA was performed, with Proficiency Level as the within-subject variable and Pronoun Type and Gender Matching as the between-subject variables. The results illustrating the interactions among these variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Effects of Proficiency, Pronoun Type, and Gender-Matching: ANOVA Results

Effects	Number of Correct Answers	
Proficiency Level	$F(1,172) = 28.357$	$p < 0.001$
Pronoun Type	$F(1,172) = 4.578$	$p = 0.034$
Gender Matching	$F(1,172) = 22.509$	$p < 0.001$
Proficiency Level * Pronoun Type	$F(1,172) = 0.002$	$p = 0.967$
Proficiency Level * Gender Matching	$F(1,172) = 8.24$	$p = 0.005$
Pronoun Type * Gender Matching	$F(1,172) = 0.078$	$p = 0.781$
Proficiency Level * Pronoun Type * Gender Matching	$F(1,172) = 0.062$	$p = 0.803$

In addition to the effects previously reported using t-tests, Table 4 reveals a significant interaction between Proficiency Level and Gender Matching regarding the number of correct responses ($F(1,172) = 8.24, p = 0.005$). Conversely, the interaction between Proficiency Level and Pronoun Type had little effect on the accuracy of responses ($F(1,172) = 0.002, p = 0.967$). Similarly, the interaction between Gender Matching and Pronoun Type was not statistically significant ($F(1,172) = 0.078, p = 0.781$). Furthermore, there was also an insignificant interaction among all three variables—Proficiency Level, Gender Matching, and Pronoun Type ($F(1,172) = 0.062, p = 0.803$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed to explore Vietnamese EFL learners’ ability to interpret English pronouns and reflexives and their understanding of the Binding Principles. The results from the forced-choice questionnaire provided a foundation for discussing these topics. The mixed ANOVA test results indicated significant main effects of Proficiency Level on participants’ anaphora interpretation abilities ($F(1,172) = 28.357, p < 0.001$). Specifically, intermediate participants struggled more than their advanced counterparts in the anaphora

test ($p < 0.001$). These findings were anticipated and closely align with those of Rago et al. (2011), who reported that their intermediate participants had a slightly lower accuracy rate in resolving anaphora (88.145%) compared to advanced participants (93.125%). Additionally, similarities can be observed among the advanced participants in both studies. Tables 2 and 3 show that advanced learners could successfully resolve both pronouns and reflexives, regardless of gender compatibility.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, advanced learners demonstrate the ability to utilize semantic cues, such as gender compatibility, to resolve anaphora, evidenced by their nearly perfect accuracy with a single gender-matching antecedent. Second, even when key semantic clues are absent in double-match conditions, advanced participants maintained a level of accuracy comparable to that of single-match conditions. This suggests that these test items required participants to apply the constraints posed by the Binding Principles, indicating that advanced learners possess knowledge of both Binding Principles A and B. Secondly, their native-like performance supports the idea that L2 learners can access Universal Grammar and its syntactic constraints, allowing them to achieve near-native proficiency in a language other than their mother tongue. Finally, the high accuracy scores may be linked to the morpho-syntactic features of English and Vietnamese reflexives, similar to the findings of MacLaughlin (1998). It appears that the pronoun attached to the English reflexive *self* restricts the phrase's binding domain, preventing it from selecting a non-local NP. However, this study did not specifically address this topic, leaving no valid grounds to confirm this effect. Nonetheless, it is plausible that the morpho-syntax of English reflexives and Binding Principle A collectively influence participants' comprehension, contributing to their excellent performance on the test.

In contrast, the intermediate group's performance in resolving anaphora significantly differed from that reported by Rago et al. (2011). Rago et al. found relatively high accuracy rates among their intermediate participants for both pronouns (88.79%) and reflexives (87.5%). In the current study, however, a disparity emerged in the interpretation of the two pronoun types, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. While the test items involving reflexives showed no significant differences in gender compatibility, intermediate learners faced greater challenges in resolving pronouns when two gender-matching competitors were present. This suggests that these participants struggled to rely on the Binding Principles for accurate pronoun comprehension.

Several explanations may account for this discrepancy between pronoun and reflexive resolution. First, the findings could stem from transfer effects from the grammar rules of their mother tongue, Vietnamese. As noted in Bui's (2019) dissertation, Vietnamese pronouns can refer to both local and non-local antecedents, violating Binding Principle B. This syntactic flexibility may

confuse intermediate participants, leading to flawed choices between local and non-local NPs for English pronouns. However, this scenario seems unlikely. If intermediate learners were influenced by their L1, one would expect them to struggle similarly with reflexives, as the Vietnamese reflexive *mình* also allows violations of Binding Principle A by accepting both local and non-local antecedents. The current results, however, indicate otherwise. Additionally, while Vietnamese pronouns can accommodate both local and non-local antecedents, native Vietnamese speakers generally adhere to the Binding Principles, often opting for the non-local NP. Therefore, it is unlikely that intermediate English learners are significantly influenced by their L1 when resolving pronouns and reflexives.

Two factors may shed light on this phenomenon. First, research suggests that speakers with lower linguistic maturity—such as native children and intermediate-level learners—experience delays in resolving pronouns compared to native adults and advanced learners (Chien & Wexler, 1990; Elbourne, 2005; Reinhart, 2004). According to Chien and Wexler, the absence of Principle P or specific pragmatic cues plays a significant role in delayed pronoun processing. However, since this study did not explicitly isolate Principle P, as Chien and Wexler did, it cannot be definitively concluded that the intermediate participants rely on Principle B rather than Principle P. Even so, despite notable differences in pronoun resolution among intermediate learners based on gender compatibility, their mean accuracy rate in double-match conditions was approximately 4.45 out of 6 (around 74%). While this accuracy was lower than in other conditions, it indicates that participants correctly resolved the majority of cases, supporting the likelihood that they have full access to Binding Principle B.

Secondly, the performance on reflexive interpretation provides insight into the asymmetry between the two pronoun types. While intermediate participants performed significantly worse than the advanced group in resolving reflexives, no notable differences were observed within the intermediate group based on gender compatibility. As previously discussed in relation to advanced participants, knowledge of Binding Principle A, coupled with the distinct morpho-syntactic features of reflexives, likely facilitates accurate interpretation, even among less proficient learners. Therefore, the skewed results in this study may be attributed to the relatively greater accessibility of linguistic resources for reflexive resolution.

The implications derived from the significance of this study are twofold. Firstly, research data indicates that Vietnamese EFL learners, particularly those with higher levels of English proficiency, have a solid understanding of the Binding Principles. This is demonstrated by their ability to accurately interpret anaphora. These findings lend support to the availability of Universal Grammar access during second language acquisition, particularly in relation to anaphora resolution. This study highlights that the interpretation of pronouns

and reflexives varies considerably between English and Vietnamese, with the grammatical rules of Vietnamese offering more flexibility in selecting appropriate antecedents. Initially, this flexibility might seem to pose significant challenges for some Vietnamese EFL learners. However, the high accuracy rates in anaphora resolution among these participants suggest that universal grammar constraints are accessible to foreign language learners, aiding them in making the correct referential choices in a new language and avoiding reliance on interlanguage systems for anaphora interpretation.

It is essential not to overlook the poorer performance of the intermediate learners, particularly in conditions requiring them to select the correct antecedent between two gender-matching NPs. Additionally, these findings underscore the importance of explicit instruction in teaching anaphora resolution, especially regarding pronouns. Explicit instruction is critical for two reasons. First, anaphora resolution is vital for comprehension; students need to resolve anaphora not only in stressful tests like the one in this study but also to understand conversations and readings both subconsciously and consciously. Second, while resolving anaphora may seem straightforward—given that learners encounter it daily and teachers appreciate their knowledge of the Binding Principles—the data in this study revealed that even high-proficiency learners made mistakes in understanding anaphora, particularly pronouns. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers provide clear, explicit guidance to help students achieve accurate interpretations. Furthermore, educators should be cautious about any underlying pragmatic cues that may lead to violations of the Binding Principles, and they should clarify these details to avoid misunderstandings.

Despite the anticipated implications and efforts to enhance the test design, this paper is not without its limitations. First, the proficiency test used in this study lacked reliability for several reasons. Since proficiency level was used to categorize participants into two groups and served as a variable in the research, the test requires significant revision. This could involve consulting additional literature in the field to gather references for the test and rigorously assessing its reliability for better application. Such improvements are expected to yield more accurate groupings based on participants' proficiency levels.

Finally, while our study provides evidence that the Binding Principles play a central role in antecedent selection during anaphora resolution, it is important to acknowledge that we did not systematically explore other potential linguistic rules or constraints that could also influence this process. Factors such as discourse context, pragmatic cues, and sentence structure might affect how learners resolve anaphors, but these were not the primary focus of our study. As noted earlier, this study also did not address Principle P, a crucial factor in pronoun resolution. Principle P remains an unexamined variable and should be incorporated in future research exploring learners' abilities to comprehend nominal pronouns. It is recommended that experiments similar to those by

Chien and Wexler (1990), which investigated bound and nominal pronouns, be considered for future studies. Additionally, cognitive processing limitations and individual differences among learners—such as proficiency level and exposure to the target language—may also impact anaphora resolution and should be taken into account in subsequent research.

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STYLE GUIDE FOR THE AUTHORS

Please note that we are changing from APA 6th edition to newer 7th edition. Authors are requested to submit manuscripts formatted in APA style (*American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.).

All manuscripts must include an abstract in English (maximum of 250 words). After the abstract please provide keywords.

Main text: 12 Times New Roman

Long citations (more than 40 words): 10 Times New Roman, indent by 1 tab either side, one empty line above and below, no quotation marks.

1.5 spacing

Format of headings

The following table demonstrates how to format headings in APA Style.

Level	Format
1	Centered, Bold, Title Case Heading Text begins as a new paragraph.
2	Flush Left, Bold, Title Case Heading Text begins as a new paragraph.
3	<i>Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading</i> Text begins as a new paragraph.
4	Indented, Bold, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period. Text begins on the same line and continues as a regular paragraph.
5	<i>Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period.</i> Text begins on the same line and continues as a regular paragraph.

Note. In title case, most words are capitalized.

In-text citations (examples):

Author's name and date in brackets:

The experience of critical incidents and effective reflection upon them allows teachers to control their classroom actions more consciously and create critical events (CE's), which were described earlier as intended, planned and controlled (Woods, 1993).

Woods (1993) believes that critical events are structured and occur in well-defined staged of conceptualization . . .

Two authors:

(Ballantyne & Packer, 1995)

As Ballantyne and Packer (1995) demonstrate ...

Three authors:

(Barker, Callahan, & Ferreira, 2009)

Subsequent use:

(Barker et al., 2009)

Six authors or more:

Lorenz et al. (1998) argued...
(Lorenz et al., 1998)

Authors whose last names are the same:

(D. Francis, 1985; H. Francis, 2004)

Online sources (unpaginated), provide paragraph or section title instead:

(Peterson & Clark, 1978, para. 4)
(Moss, Springer, & Dehr, 2008, Discussion section, para. 1)

No author, provide shortened title:

("Primary Teachers Talking," 2007)
(*Reflective Practice*, 2005, pp. 12–25)

Secondary citations:

Smith (as cited in Maxx & Meyer, 2000) noted that "there is"

Citation within citation:

As it has been noted that "there is no relevance . . . (Smith, 2005)" (Maxx & Meyer, 2000, p. 129).

& vs. and:

As Smithson and Stones (1999) demonstrated. . .
. . . as has been shown (Smithson & Stones, 1999) . . .

References

Selected examples (for more consult APA manual 7th ed.):

Book, one author:

Goldberg, A. (2006). *Constructions at work*. Oxford University Press.

Book, two authors and more:

Jarvis, S., & Pavlenko, A. (2008). *Crosslinguistic influence in language cognition*. Routledge.

Translated book:

Freud, S. (1960). *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. (J. Strachey, Trans.). Routledge & K. Paul. (Original work published 1905).

Edited book:

Flowerdew, J., Brock, M., & Hsia, S. (Eds.). (1992). *Second language teacher education*. City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.

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Goldberg, A., & Casenhiser, D. (2008). Construction learning and second language acquisition. In P. Robinson & N. C. Ellis (Eds.), *Handbook of cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition* (pp. 197–215). Routledge.

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