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Enhancing English Oral Communication Skills through Virtual Reality: A Study on Anxiety Reduction and Authentic Learning

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Abstract

This study delves into the efficacy of a curriculum emphasizing English oral communication, employing virtual reality (VR) technology. Virtual presentations emulate real-world speaking scenarios, such as classroom presentations and elevator pitches, to provide students with authentic experiences in public speaking and interview interactions. Through ongoing pedagogical inquiry, the research endeavors to deepen comprehension among students and educators regarding integrating virtual reality into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, explicitly focusing on presentations. The investigation scrutinizes the impact of varied learning environments, particularly the reduction of anxiety and the facilitation of authentic learning through virtual reality, on students' beliefs, confidence levels, and subsequent English language proficiency. By scrutinizing shifts in students' anxiety levels pre- and post-intervention, the study furnishes valuable insights and recommendations for future research and pedagogical practices. These insights aim to equip educators with strategies to mitigate student anxiety, enhance the efficacy of VR applications in language instruction, and enrich overall learning experiences.

Keywords: virtual reality, English oral communication, student anxiety, language proficiency

1. Introduction

In academic discourse, scholars have extensively examined the correlation between learner anxiety and language acquisition efficacy (Brown, 1973; Horwitz, 1986; Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2000). Anxiety manifestations are often observed across three distinct phases of the language learning process: the input stage, the processing stage, and the output stage (Tobias, 1986). Within the realm of foreign language acquisition, researchers have identified three primary types of anxiety: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Horwitz, 1986). Furthermore, scholars have analyzed how anxiety impacts the four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Notably, anxiety during the output stage tends to be particularly pronounced, attributed partly to the heightened expectations placed on students to deliver coherent communication within limited time constraints (Kim, 2000; Horwitz, 2001; Andrade & Williams, 2009). Compared to English listening and reading proficiencies, anxiety stemming from speaking activities further diminishes learners' self-assurance and motivation. Scholars in Taiwan have highlighted that despite teaching English from elementary school through university, students exhibit a heightened concern for grammatical accuracy and a fear of making errors, leading to reticence in speaking English (Chen, 2010).

Moreover, in the context of foreign language acquisition, learners often experience heightened anxiety during oral communication outside the classroom compared to structured exercises or quizzes within the classroom setting (Woodrow, 2006). This anxiety is exacerbated by the necessity to express oneself in a second language, leading to frustration as learners struggle to translate thoughts from their native language into the target language (Horwitz, 2001). Cheng (1999) further delineates that anxiety in second language classrooms differs from that in other subjects, such as mathematics or science, primarily due to the requirement for students not only to comprehend new language concepts but also to articulate their thoughts in the target language concurrently, thus creating a unique form of situational anxiety.

In empirical studies, anxiety is closely associated with students' proficiency in their second foreign language, particularly in the oral aspect. Eliminating student anxiety within a short timeframe proves challenging. Nonetheless, research indicates that integrating authentic learning within the target language context can enhance

learning motivation and encourage language use for communication. However, executing mission-oriented tasks in traditional course contexts poses difficulties for students. Therefore, enabling learners to engage in language tasks within virtual environments may offer a solution. By experiencing virtual situations, students can better appreciate the benefits of authentic learning. Moreover, the language communication opportunities facilitated by VR can alleviate anxiety in testing, public speaking, and mock interview scenarios—opportunities typically unavailable in traditional classrooms. Consequently, this study aims to investigate how learners can mitigate learning anxiety through virtual reality-based language tasks, focusing on decreasing students' overall anxiety and increasing comfort in speaking in English.

Research questions:

1. Do VR communication tasks effectively reduce anxiety levels among students?
2. How do VR communication tasks impact different aspects of anxiety, such as fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anticipated anxious behaviors?
3. Is there a differential impact of VR communication tasks on test anxiety and comfort in speaking English among students?

2. Literature Review

To gain insights into the impact of student anxiety on their oral proficiency, particularly in English presentations and situational conversations, and to explore the influence of virtual reality on language learning, a comprehensive review of relevant literature was conducted. The review focused on three primary contexts: the assessment of anxiety, Authentic Learning in Language Education, and Virtual Reality and Language Education.

2.1 The Assessment of Anxiety

To summarize, mitigating anxiety holds significant importance in college English instruction. However, the evaluation of anxiety poses a necessary challenge. Numerous scholars have delineated various theoretical frameworks for examination. For instance, Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is commonly employed to explore anxiety experienced within the classroom setting. This scale categorizes anxiety into three dimensions: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Notably, subsequent scholars have adapted this scale to investigate variations in learning environments and target languages, with some scholars incorporating learner comfort as a fourth dimension (Aida, 1994). This addition is crucial as it acknowledges the importance of assessing learners' ease in utilizing a second language alongside anxiety reduction efforts. Additional assessment tools include the Speaker Anxiety Scale (SA) developed by Clevenger and Halvorson (1992), which focuses on learners' anxiety when presenting on stage and encompasses nine sub-dimensions, such as anxiety before presenting and physical manifestations of anxiety. Similarly, the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS) by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) integrates elements from previous scholars. It evaluates anxiety across four dimensions: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and comfort in using English. Given the cultural and educational relevance between Japan and Taiwan, with English as the target language, this PSAS version was chosen to align with the study.

2.2 Authentic Learning in Language Education

In recent years, constructivism has influenced language education, extending beyond grammar instruction to emphasize contextualized teaching in authentic environments (Benson, 2001; Mishan, 2005; Henderson, 2012; Lan, 2013; Lan et al., 2015). Within higher education English teaching, there is a growing advocacy for experiential and situated learning, aiming to integrate real-world English communication tasks into instructional practices (Benson et al., 2001). This shift underscores pedagogical priorities such as meaningful contextual learning, practical application of teaching knowledge, student-centered approaches, and cultivating learner autonomy and societal interactions. Authentic learning is particularly vital in language education for several reasons. Firstly, it enhances learners' motivation by facilitating active participation and providing real-life materials that offer practical utility (Mishan, 2005). Secondly, it fosters interaction in language learning by exposing learners to authentic communication dynamics and societal norms within the target language environment (Henderson, 2012). Finally, it promotes learner autonomy by eschewing standardized outcomes in favor of personalized learning experiences that cater to diverse contexts and cultural dynamics (Lan, 2013).

2.3 Virtual Reality and Language Education.

Virtual Reality (VR) utilizes 3D imaging technology and computer equipment to simulate real-world objects, people, and environments (Stendal et al., 2011). Unlike traditional learning environments, VR is not constrained by spatial, temporal, or physical limitations, allowing for customizable scenarios tailored to specific educational needs (Stendal et al., 2011). This flexibility enables students to explore diverse environments and cultures across various fields and engage in remote interactions with individuals worldwide. Research on VR in education highlights its numerous advantages, including the provision of realistic and adaptable learning environments, reduced costs and risks associated with education and training, and increased learner motivation through immersive experiences (Eg, Jauregi, et al., 2011; Wehner et al., 2011; Melchor-Couto, 2017; Radianti et al., 2019; Margherita, 2019; Ying et al., 2019). In language education, VR offers authentic communication opportunities and realistic content, which are considered significant benefits (Von der Emde et al., 2001). Scholars have identified several advantages and disadvantages of VR in language teaching. For instance, the study by Mohammed (2019) demonstrated that learning vocabulary through VR is more effective than traditional methods due to increased eye contact, enhanced interest, and flexible learning pacing. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that students in virtual game environments exhibit improved vocabulary and spelling abilities (Anke et al., 2013). Moreover, VR facilitates the visualization of students' learning data, allowing educators to tailor teaching materials and methods based on individual learning strategies (Hsian et al., 2017).

The above literature review encompasses three key domains: anxiety assessment, authentic learning in language education, and virtual reality (VR) in language education. Regarding anxiety assessment, prior studies have underscored the significance of mitigating anxiety in college English instruction, employing various theoretical frameworks and assessment tools such as Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), the Speaker Anxiety Scale (SA), and the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS). However, while these tools offer valuable insights, there remains a need for further exploration, particularly in assessing learner comfort alongside anxiety reduction efforts. Recent trends in authentic language education advocate for contextualized, experiential learning in real-world environments, emphasizing learner motivation, interaction, and autonomy. This shift reflects a pedagogical prioritization of practical application and personalized learning experiences. Finally, in VR and language education, research has highlighted the advantages of VR in providing realistic, immersive learning environments, enhancing learner motivation, and facilitating authentic communication opportunities. Despite these advantages, there remains a gap in understanding the nuanced effects of VR on language learning outcomes, especially in addressing student anxiety and promoting authentic language use within VR environments. Thus, while existing literature offers valuable insights into each domain, the present study aims to contribute by investigating the intersection of these areas, specifically exploring how VR technology can mitigate anxiety and foster authentic language learning experiences in English oral communication contexts.

3. Method

3.1 Participants and Context

The participants in this study consisted of students enrolled in an "English Presentation" course at a Medical University in Taipei, Taiwan. Each class was limited to a small size, with a maximum of 30 students per class, ensuring optimal speaking opportunities. The course, conducted entirely in English, was designed for students with a TOEIC score exceeding 650, indicating a moderate to advanced level of English proficiency or a strong interest in enhancing their English-speaking skills.

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Anxiety Scale

The pre-and post-tests in this study utilize the EFL Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) developed by Yaikhong and Usaha in 2012. This scale comprises 17 items, consisting of 17 items grouped into four factors: Fear of Negative Evaluation and Nervousness, Comfort in Speaking English (scored in reverse), Test Anxiety, and Anticipated Anxious Behaviors. It employs a five-point Likert scale method, where higher scores indicate greater student anxiety levels.

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

During the seventh week of the course, students participate in semi-structured interviews to elucidate the effects of virtual reality on English-speaking anxiety, as well as their experiences and self-reflections during virtual reality immersion.

3.2.3 VR teaching/learning Software

This study's primary virtual reality software is Virtual Speech, developed by a British developer. This software offers a user-friendly virtual reality application designed to enhance speech skills. It was chosen initially for its online interactive training features, presentation upload capability, personal learning progress tracking, and real-time feedback on oral presentations, rendering Virtual Speech a comprehensive platform for language learning.

The virtual reality (VR) tasks or activities employed in the intervention encompass various aspects to provide comprehensive oral communication training. For instance, students may engage in virtual meetings, simulating professional communication within a team setting. They might be tasked with delivering presentations, mirroring scenarios where they present ideas or findings to an audience in academic or business contexts. These presentations may involve using different language styles and techniques, such as formal or informal tones, as well as practical topic discussion and structural arrangements. Additionally, students may participate in simulated job interviews to enhance their oral expression skills in real-world job scenarios. These activities aim to provide authentic communication experiences in a virtual environment while also assisting students in continuously improving their oral expression skills through real-time feedback and progress tracking. Through these virtual reality tasks, students can practice and enhance their speaking abilities in a safe and supportive environment, ultimately helping alleviate anxiety in real-world situations and boosting their confidence.

3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were employed to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Quantitatively, SPSS software was utilized to analyze English-speaking anxiety and pre-and post-test results regarding VR exposure. Independent samples t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to identify variations in students' levels of English-speaking anxiety. In contrast, regression analysis also explored the predictive effect of virtual reality on anxiety reduction across different dimensions. These quantitative findings inform future interview questions to ensure alignment between student self-assessment and observed behaviors. Qualitatively, the TOEFL iBT Test rubric has already been administered at the beginning and end of the semester to measure student language learning progress. Additionally, the qualitative analysis involved coding interviews and in-class presentation videos, which are ongoing and only partially reported in this study. Later, it can further compare the usefulness of various VR tasks to student speaking ability variations throughout the learning process and then triangulate them with quantitative data.

4. Results

The three research questions mentioned guide the following analysis, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the VR communication tasks and the provision of valuable insights into anxiety reduction in the context of English public speaking. As the analysis proceeds, the findings and observations will be presented, addressing each of these questions in turn.

4.1 Recruitment

Data preprocessing involves several steps. Firstly, responses were restricted to students who completed both pre- and post-surveys. Secondly, columns unrelated to the PSCAS survey were excluded. Finally, responses from different terms within the specified school year were aggregated. Following these procedures, the dataset comprised responses from 43 students who fulfilled the criteria of completing both pre- and post-surveys.

4.2 Statistics and Data Analysis

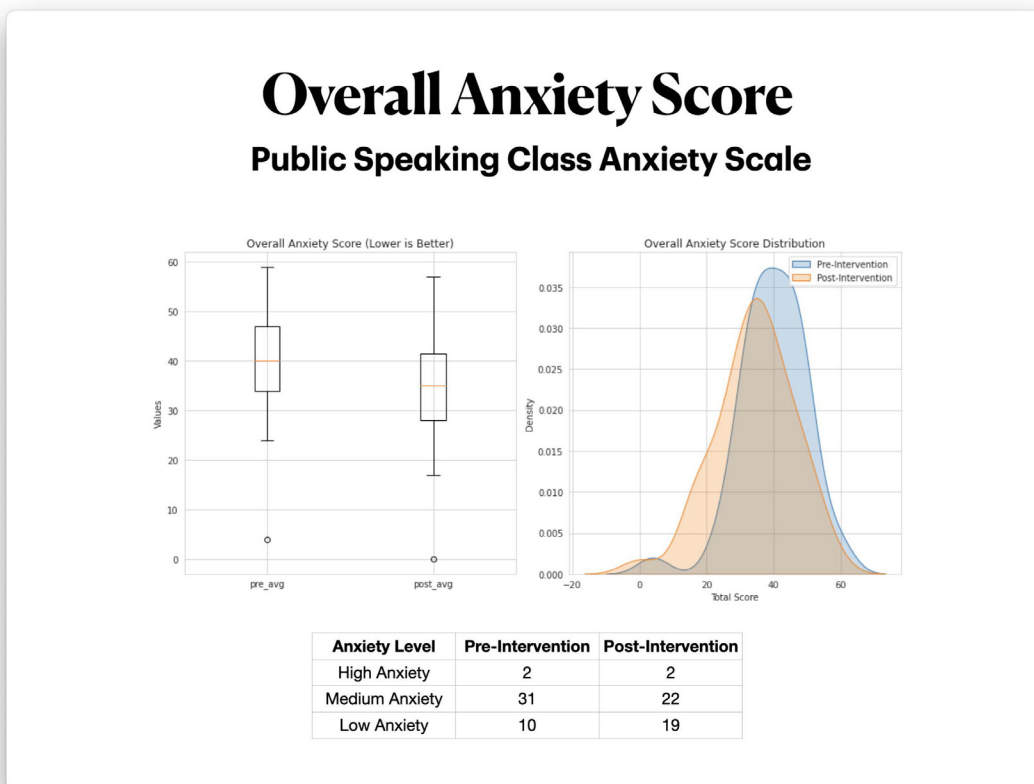


Figure 1. Overall Anxiety Score

Before the intervention, the dataset comprised responses from 43 participants, with a mean score of 39.70 and a standard deviation of 9.94. The minimum score recorded was 4, while the maximum was 59. The first quartile (25%) of scores was 34, with the median (50%) at 40, and the third quartile (75%) at 47. Following the intervention, 43 participants were assessed again, yielding a mean score of 34.16 and a standard deviation of 11.62. The lowest score observed post-intervention was 0, and the highest was 57. Quartile scores post-intervention were 28 for the first quartile, 35 for the median, and 41.50 for the third quartile. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the VR intervention aimed at reducing anxiety, as measured by the PSCAS Anxiety Score and various factors, including Fear of Negative Evaluation and Nervousness, Comfort in Speaking English (Scored in Reverse), Test Anxiety, and Anticipated Anxious Behaviors (as shown in Figure 1.). The null hypothesis for each test posits that the median difference between paired pre- and post-intervention scores is zero, implying no effect of the intervention.

Table 1. PSCAS Anxiety Score

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	p-value
PSCAS Anxiety Score	Negative Rank	32	24.40625	144	0.000201275
	Positive Rank	9	18		
	Ties	2			

The analysis of PSCAS Anxiety Scores (see Table 1.) involved 32 participants showing a decrease in scores post-intervention (Negative Rank), 9 participants with increased scores (Positive Rank), and 2 participants with no change (Ties). The sum of ranks for the hostile ranks was 144, with a mean rank of 24.41, suggesting a predominant decrease in anxiety scores. In contrast, the positive ranks were fewer in number and sum, indicating fewer instances of increased anxiety scores post-intervention. The obtained p-value of 0.000201275, substantially below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, signifies a statistically significant decrease in anxiety scores following the intervention (M = 24.41, SD = 5.63, p < .001).

Table 2. Four Factors of Anxiety

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	p-value
Factor 1: Fear of Negative Evaluation and Nervousness	Negative Rank	22	29.3636364	147	0.0098418
	Positive Rank	12	21.25		
	Ties	9			
Factor 2 (Reversed): Comfort in Speaking English (Scored in Reversed)	Negative Rank	27	27.6851852	77.5	0.00045064
	Positive Rank	5	26.5		
	Ties	11			
Factor 3: Test Anxiety	Negative Rank	25	25.64	179	0.04130162
	Positive Rank	9	28.8888889		
	Ties	9			
Factor 4: Anticipated Anxious Behaviors	Negative Rank	26	25.7884615	188.5	0.01343716
	Positive Rank	11	23.1363636		
	Ties	6			

In Table 2., significant reductions were observed in Factor One: Fear of Negative Evaluation and Nervousness, with a p-value of 0.0098418 confirming improvements among 22 participants. The mean rank and sum of ranks indicate a meaningful decrease in related anxieties post-intervention. Factor Two, representing Comfort in Speaking English (Reversed), demonstrated a significant increase in comfort levels ($p = 0.00045064$), underscoring the intervention's efficacy in addressing this anxiety. The analysis reveals a notable shift towards enhanced comfort in speaking English among participants. Factor Three, Test Anxiety, exhibited a statistically significant reduction ($p = 0.04130162$), suggesting the intervention's role in moderately alleviating testing-related pressure and anxiety. Finally, Factor Four, Anticipated Anxious Behaviors, saw a significant decrease ($p = 0.01343716$) post-intervention, indicating improved coping mechanisms.

Overall, the analysis revealed noteworthy trends regarding the impact of the intervention on students' anxiety levels. Specifically, a higher mean negative rank than the mean positive rank across all factors suggests that, on average, the decrease in anxiety scores outweighed any increases. Additionally, the more significant number of hostile ranks compared to positive ranks across all factors indicates that more students experienced an anxiety reduction. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test results further bolstered these findings, affirming the intervention's effectiveness in reducing anxiety levels, both in overall PSCAS Anxiety Scores and across specific anxiety-related factors. This comprehensive examination validates the success of this VR intervention in achieving its anxiety reduction objective. It delineates areas of substantial impact, offering valuable insights for future interventions targeting student anxiety alleviation.

4.3 Interviews

Eighteen students were selected as interviewees due to their notably above-average improvement in pre-and post-test results. The results underscore the students' positive perceptions of virtual reality, alleviating anxiety and enhancing confidence. They highlight the ease with which students can practice oral expression within virtual environments, coupled with the insightful feedback provided, contributing to a strengthened confidence in their English language abilities. Interviewees emphasized confidence, immediate feedback, and realistic presence in VR experiences. VR boosted confidence, provided valuable real-time feedback, and offered an authentic stage-like environment, enhancing language learning. Here are some excerpts:

Student A remarked: Engaging in English oral practice through virtual reality (VR) has significantly bolstered my confidence. Within the virtual environment, I can practice speeches and conversations without external audience pressure, fostering a sense of relaxation and ease. Real-time feedback allows me to better comprehend my strengths and areas for improvement, further enhancing my self-assurance.

Student B shared: Previously, I always felt highly anxious speaking English in public settings. However, through virtual reality experiences, I have begun to perceive an improvement in my oral proficiency. Within the virtual realm, I can simulate diverse scenarios, better preparing myself for communication encounters in real-life situations. It is not like rehearsing in front of the mirror. This newfound readiness has instilled greater confidence in facing challenges associated with English communication.

Student C articulated: Engaging in English oral practice via virtual reality has evoked excitement and positivity within me. Within the virtual domain, I can surmount difficulties that may arise in real-world contexts, thereby bolstering my confidence. Furthermore, receiving timely feedback aids in better understanding my performance and guides improvement. This affirmative experience instills confidence in enhancing my English oral proficiency.

Student D expressed: The VR simulations provided an incredibly realistic stage presence, replicating the feeling of being in front of an audience. This immersive experience allowed me to gain valuable experience in delivering presentations and engaging in conversations, all within a safe and controlled environment. As a result, I felt more confident and prepared when faced with similar situations in real life. The virtual reality platform enhanced my skills and instilled a sense of self-assurance in my abilities.

5. Discussion

This study sought to assess the efficacy of a Virtual Reality (VR) intervention in mitigating diverse forms of anxiety among students, utilizing the PSCAS Anxiety Score and examining its effects on specific anxiety-related factors. The results revealed substantial decreases in anxiety levels following the intervention, offering significant insights into the complex dynamics of anxiety reduction within educational contexts.

5.1 Effectiveness of VR Intervention in Reducing General Anxiety Levels

The first research question directly explores the overarching goal of the intervention, focusing on whether the VR tasks designed to improve English presentation skills also succeeded in reducing students' anxiety levels, as measured by the PSCAS Anxiety Score and various anxiety-related factors. The effectiveness of the VR intervention in alleviating student anxiety levels is unequivocally affirmed. The noteworthy decline in the PSCAS Anxiety Score, evidenced by a p-value of 0.000201275, signifies a significant reduction in overall anxiety levels among participants. This outcome underscores VR's success in fulfilling its primary goal of mitigating anxiety, especially within English presentations. The observed decrease in anxiety scores post-intervention, accompanied by a higher sum and mean rank of hostile ranks, further underscores the intervention's effectiveness.

5.2 Impact on Specific Aspects of Anxiety

Beyond the general effect on anxiety levels, the second research question delves into the nuanced impact of the course on distinct dimensions of anxiety. It investigates whether the VR intervention's effects were broad-based or if they were particularly effective in addressing specific types of anxiety more than others. The intervention had a significant and diverse impact on aspects of anxiety, encompassing fear of negative evaluation, comfort in speaking English, test anxiety, and anticipated anxious behaviors. The observed significant changes across all factors, with p-values ranging from 0.00045064 to 0.04130162, underscore the comprehensive effectiveness of the VR tasks. Particularly noteworthy was the substantial effect observed in 'Comfort in Speaking English (Scored in Reverse),' indicated by a highly significant p-value of 0.00045064. This suggests that VR notably enhanced students' comfort levels with English communication, a crucial aspect for reducing overall communication-related anxiety.

5.3 Differential Impact on Test Anxiety and Comfort in Speaking English

The third research question aims to compare the effectiveness of the intervention across different aspects of anxiety, specifically focusing on test anxiety versus comfort in speaking English. It seeks to understand if the VR's task design was more conducive to alleviating performance-related anxiety or was equally effective in enhancing comfort in communication skills in English. Noteworthy trends emerge after comparing VR's impact on test anxiety versus comfort in speaking English. While both areas exhibited significant improvement, the more pronounced effect on comfort in speaking English implies the efficacy of the course's practical components, likely emphasizing real-life communication scenarios. This differential impact underscores the significance of

tailored interventions targeting specific anxiety triggers, such as fear of real-time communication, which may be addressed more effectively than generalized test anxiety.

5.4 Comparison between Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Utilizing virtual reality (VR) experiences shows substantial promise in alleviating anxiety among non-native English speakers, as evidenced by qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data. Qualitative interviews revealed that VR environments provide a secure and supportive space for learners to engage in English oral expression, fostering confidence through immersive experiences and real-time feedback mechanisms. Additionally, quantitative survey data demonstrated significant improvements in anxiety levels among participants exposed to VR interventions, particularly in enhancing students' comfort level with English communication. The convergence of findings from qualitative and quantitative analyses underscores the potential of VR integration in language education to mitigate anxiety and enhance learners' confidence and proficiency in diverse communicative contexts. These results contribute significantly to the pedagogical discourse within language education, highlighting the efficacy of VR in providing a secure learning environment, real-time feedback mechanisms, and diversified practice scenarios.

6. Conclusion

The examination of anxiety scores both pre- and post-course reveals a notable decline in anxiety levels following the intervention, with the post-intervention distribution displaying a leftward skew indicative of reduced anxiety. Observations indicate the effectiveness of VR communication tasks, particularly in enhancing students' comfort in speaking English. Initial anxiety levels were highest in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Anticipated Anxious Behaviors. At the same time, there was a significant increase in comfort in speaking English and a decrease in test anxiety post-course. However, there remains room for improvement in addressing Fear of Negative Evaluation and Anticipated Anxious Behaviors, which maintained a medium anxiety level post-intervention (see Figure 2.).

Overview Across the Board Improvements

Category	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Δ
Factor 1	3.372093	3.055814	0.316279
Factor 2	2.604651	3.005814	0.401163
Factor 3	3.038760	2.821705	0.217054
Factor 4	3.372093	3.069767	0.302326

Anxiety Level	Raw Score Range	Mean Score Range
High	> 68	> 4
Medium	51 - 68	3 - 4
Low	< 51	< 3

- **Communication Anxiety and Anxious Behaviors have the same Highest Anxiety Level to start with (Factor 1 & 4)**
- **Students are more Comfortable to Speak (Factor 2)**
- **Students have less Test Anxiety to start with (Factor 3)**

Figure 2. Overview of the Improvements

Based on the discussion presented, we offer practical recommendations and research directions to reduce student anxiety levels and enhance course effectiveness. Firstly, we suggest designing different VR tasks to address Factor One (Fear of Negative Evaluation) and Factor Four (Anticipated Anxious Behaviors), which still exhibit moderate anxiety levels among students. Secondly, given that Factor Three (Test Anxiety) remains relatively unchanged, we recommend prioritizing efforts to manage students' test-related stress and improve their coping mechanisms. We propose implementing ongoing assessment methods to monitor long-term changes in student anxiety levels beyond the VR intervention. For further research, we suggest exploring additional factors influencing anxiety levels, such as gender, different English background proficiency, distance learning methods, and overall student satisfaction, to tailor interventions more effectively to diverse student groups.

Furthermore, conducting in-depth analyses of individual student data can help identify outliers and trends, enabling more targeted intervention strategies. Finally, analyzing correlations between different anxiety factors can enhance our understanding of the complexity of anxiety issues and provide better guidance for future intervention efforts. These recommendations and research directions aim to assist educators in effectively reducing student anxiety, improving effectiveness while applying VR to language teaching, and enhancing overall learning experiences. In a nutshell, we underscore the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to VR intervention in anxiety management. We also offer valuable directions for future research to deepen our understanding of anxiety dynamics within EFL public speaking contexts. The results of this study hold significant implications for enhancing students' academic success and well-being.

7. Implication and Limitation

The pedagogical implications discussed emphasize the significance of employing multifaceted virtual reality (VR) interventions to manage anxiety in public speaking contexts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Practical recommendations include designing diverse VR tasks targeting specific anxiety factors and prioritizing alleviating test-related stress to reduce student anxiety levels and effectively enhance course effectiveness. Additionally, in curriculum design and teaching material planning, the integration of VR technology into classrooms should be customized while considering learning effectiveness mechanisms and assessment rubrics (develop differentiated VR teaching tasks based on students' CEFR level). This integration provides rich practical exercises and feedback mechanisms to enhance students' learning experiences and skill development. However, research limitations encompass differences in self-esteem among culturally diverse and high-achieving students, which may affect their acceptance and effectiveness of VR interventions. Hence, further research is warranted to tailor teaching strategies and intervention measures to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and academic achievement levels and to explore the influence of cultural factors on the effectiveness of VR interventions.

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Navigating Professional Identity: Insights into the Effects of Post-Observation Conferences on Educational Supervisors

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Abstract

This research endeavors to investigate the influence of post-observation conferences (POCs) on the professional identity of educational supervisors within public education settings. POCs represent dialogic sessions conducted between supervisors and teachers subsequent to classroom observations, where they deliberate on the strengths and areas for enhancement in the observed teaching practices. Professional identity, in this context, pertains to the self-understanding and self-image concerning one's role and responsibilities as an educational supervisor. Employing a qualitative, narrative inquiry research design, the study utilizes semi-structured interviews and a focus group as data collection methods. The study involves two English language educational supervisors located in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, as participants. Data analysis is conducted through thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases. The findings underscore the significant impact of POCs on the professional identity of educational supervisors, facilitating avenues for learning, feedback, reflection, and collaboration. Moreover, the study identifies challenges and offers suggestions to enhance the quality and effectiveness of POCs. By contributing to the literature on educational supervision and professional development, this study furnishes educational implications for practice.

Keywords: supervisors, post-observation conferences, professional identity, identity formation, supervisors' perceptions

1. Introduction

Professional identity in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) has become a trending topic in research in the last decade (Gu & Benson, 2014; Izadinia, 2015; Barkhuizen, 2016; Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Donaghue, 2020; Gholami et al., 2021; Wei, 2021). Further, the number of studies which discuss factors that contribute to the construction of identity in the field of TESOL is growing rapidly, see (Varghese et al., 2005; Tsui, 2007; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Grimmer et al., 2009; Trent, 2010; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Yuan, 2016; Sang, 2020; Donaghue, 2020; Villegas et al., 2020) to name a few. In addition, these factors vary depending on the angle from which the researcher is looking at identity. For example, Gu and Benson studied how sociocultural factors effect teacher' identity as it is constructed in the course of teacher education (2014). Another study focused on the mentoring relationships between mentors and preservice teachers in regard to how these relationships play a role in changing the professional identities of teachers (Izadinia, 2015). Barkhuizen, on the other hand, discussed how reflective practices are related to teachers' awareness and understanding of their professional identities (2016). Similarly, Ivanova & Skara-Mincane published an article that looks at reflective self-evaluation as a factor which helps develop professional identities (2016). In a more recent study, another article considered the interrelation and tension between personal experiences of a teacher and the social-political contexts and their effects on professional identity formation (Wei, 2021). This particular article referred to the concept of "personal meaning-making" experiences that pose critical challenges which require those experiencing them to fully live them as well as think thoroughly about them both in personal or professional contexts (Wei, 2021 p. 3).

Similarly, one of the main factors that contribute to the construction of identity and is constantly recurrent in literature is the professional context (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Tateo, 2012; Barkhuizen, 2016; Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016; Edwards & Burns, 2016; Noonan, 2019). The professional context is seen as one of the most significant contexts contributing to professional identity formation (Farrell, 2011; Izadinia, 2015; Shah et

al., 2018; Andreassen et al., 2019). For instance, Edwards & Burns pointed out to the “struggle” that teachers go through in search of legitimizing “new identities” in professional contexts (2016, p. 735). On the other hand, Cheng shed some light on how do professional interactions and all their formed experiences have the protentional to shape professional identities (2021). According to Wenger’s theory of identity formation, every profession requires a certain degree of engagement with others which consequently paves the way for professional contexts where identities emerge and are formed (1998). Further, participating in professional contexts encourages participants to develop their own self-directed professional identities (De Bruijn & Leeman, 2011; Cremers et al., 2016). That is to say, when participants intentionally choose to attend certain professional events, as opposed to other events, their awareness of their professional identity formation is actually taking shape and developing. Usually, educators have rare chances that offer them the opportunity to interact and discuss their practice with their peers (Farrell, 2011). In this line of thought, a post-observation conference (POC) is one of the most important professional contexts where teachers and educational supervisors engage in dialogic educational interactions regarding the teaching practice. A POC can be defined as the dyadic meeting that occurs between a teacher and an educational supervisor. During a POC, the teacher’s performance is discussed and/or assessed, constructively, collectively, or both, immediately after an actual classroom-teaching has been observed. Further, the assessment process usually focuses on individualized supervision, based on the specific teacher that has been observed, to assist in improving that teacher’s instructional performance. This process may cause some tensions and power negotiations between supervisors and teachers (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008; Kim & Silver, 2016; Donaghue, 2020b). In reference to POCs proceedings, Copland described how these meetings might suggest that supervisors have the right to deliver assessing remarks to teachers, while teachers could provide only self-assessment which might be sometimes overwhelming (2010). Clearly, POCs proceedings do not always run as smooth as one might think. Correspondingly, it is crucial to mention that the assessment of one’s ability to practice as well as one’s professional contribution is one of the most emotionally stimulating activities in the professional life (Vásquez, 2004; Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). Thus, the emotionality that is associated with POCs, which are sometime seen by teachers as an assessment process where judgments are eventually made, must be considered in approaching interactions that actually take place between educational supervisors and teachers during POCs.

These conferences provide an opportunity for English language educational supervisors (hereafter referred to as supervisors) to meet with English language teachers (hereafter referred to as teachers), after classroom observations. During these conferences, supervisors discuss the teachers’ practices, strengths, and areas of possible improvement (Mette & Riegel, 2018). In addition, POCs provide an opportunity for supervisors and teachers to discuss the observations that have been made as well as an opportunity for teachers and supervisors to reflect on their practices. Also, they offer supervisors and teachers the chance to discuss potential areas of improvement and to develop a plan for how to move forward. In addition, POCs can be seen as professional events where actual interactions happen and lived experiences are formed between supervisors and teachers. These experiences and interactions that take place in a professional context can have a significant impact on the teacher’s and the supervisor’s sense of their professional identities. Since POCs are places where interactions occur between individuals, it is understandable that incidents happen where things might not go the way they were intended to. Before we dive into the ocean of interactions, we will take a look at what is meant by educational supervision. In the following lines, and from my own experience as an English language educational supervisor, we will take a brief look at the profession of educational supervision and what is typically involved in being an educational supervisor.

With all that said, and as demonstrated above, POCs are of great significance when it comes to professional interactions between supervisors and teachers. The notions of experiences and professional contexts are fundamental to this current paper. That is, the quest to study how the way supervisors interact with teachers and create experiences in professional contexts could eventually impact their professional identities formation. To sum up, the duties of a supervisor can vary depending on the context in which they work, but then, this paper is only concerned with activities that supervisors perform which involve interactions with teachers during one professional event which is a POC, and how would this event impact the professional identity of supervisors.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Dewey has demonstrated how interactions have a direct effect on formulating experiences which have an impact on future interactions and experiences in what he referred to as an “experiential continuum” (1997, p. 9). In short, experiential continuum suggests that each experience adopts something from prior experiences and modifies the quality of succeeding experiences. Looking through this lens, one can clearly see the continuous association between a POC with the subsequent one. That is to say, a previous proceeding of a POC must have a direct or

indirect effect on the next POC as an inevitable result of how individuals interact and recognize their experiences. Also, Dewey asserts that the nature of impact on subsequent experiences, whether positive or negative, depends on the quality of the previous ones within any given context (1986). Again, a POC is one of the contexts where interactions take place between teachers and supervisors and that is why this paper suggests that it is one of the most important interactive professional events that influences supervisors' professional identity.

For this reason, I started to realize the significance of the supervisors' perceived knowledge regarding their, sometimes spontaneous or natural, contribution to the construction and development of their own professional identities during POCs in our local context. Similarly, I reflected on my past experiences as a teacher during previous POCs and remembered some instances that have impacted my career as a teacher and then as a supervisor. Consequently, I came to the realization that POCs have contributed to my personal understanding about the profession in general and supervision in particular. Additionally, several studies have implied that educators have to self-study their learning trajectories in order to enhance their practice (Ajayi & Lee, 2005; Pena & Almaguer, 2005; Scheeler et al., 2006; Soslau, 2015). So far, and during my reading through relevant literature, I came to realize that such valuable experiences and professional perceptions have not been scientifically documented before. Therefore, the purpose of this narrative-inquiry qualitative research is to report on the supervisors' perceived knowledge about their understanding and awareness of the construction and development of their professional identities during POCs that are held with teachers in public and private schools in Makkah city, Saudi Arabia. The aim is to come up with relevant educational implications that would help look at POCs as a comprehensible positive professional event for all the parties involved. At this stage in the research, the perceived knowledge of the supervisors in constructing and developing their professional identities will be defined as the knowledge that supervisors have acquired through past experiences and how this knowledge is advocating and affirming the construction of their professional identities. The research will try to provide answers to the following research questions:

- (1) How do POCs impact the professional identities of supervisors?
- (2) Would supervisors' perceptions help make POC a more constructive professional event?

2. Research Design

This research follows a qualitative approach using a narrative-inquiry design. Creswell and Creswell characterized qualitative research as interpretative and defined it as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2018). As the researcher is deeply involved in the study, the qualitative design takes into consideration this involvement for the purpose of allowing the researcher to get a reflective and comprehensive understanding of the matter under investigation (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Clark et al., 2021). Further, the aim of a qualitative research is understanding and explaining perceptions and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2011).

2.1 Research Participants and Data Collection

For the purpose of this research, two male English language educational supervisors were interviewed. They are all residents of Makkah, and all of them have a minimum experience of thirteen years in the field of educational supervision. The participants were between 46 and 55 years old and both of them were assigned pseudonyms as S1 and S2.

For this part of the research, three rounds of interviews were made. In the first round, I conducted a face-to-face semi-structural interview with each of the participants. In the second round, a follow-up interview with each of the participants to reaffirm and confirm my initial interpretations. All the interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience. Finally, in the third round, a focus-group interview was conducted with the participants to reach a mutual understanding and agreement on the interpretations of the first two rounds.

2.2 Data Analysis

All the individual interviews were conducted face-to-face. The data analysis in qualitative research relies on the subjective interpretation of the collected data (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In preparation for qualitative analysis, the researcher revisited the collected data several times to grasp the general sense of the information contained and to write preliminary thoughts of his understanding. Then the data was represented inductively by three predetermined themes which are: a supervisor as a former teacher, a novice supervisor, an experienced supervisor. Also, the above themes, as categories of their own, provided subcategories that were coded as sub-themes which reflected the participants' perceptions about their experiences in a natural flow of thoughts. Each of the above themes has sub-themes.

The purpose of this step is to establish a timeline to see how do the interviewees perceive the phenomena in terms of participants' expressions and thoughts about their lived experiences during POCs, and how they relate their perceptions to past experiences. Also, the above themes, as categories of their own, provided subcategories that were coded as sub-themes which reflected the participants' perceptions about their experiences in a natural flow of thoughts.

3. Presentation and Discussion of Results

As mentioned above, the various themes emerged which basically fashioned a chronological understanding of the professional identity formation of supervisors. Primarily, as narrative inquiry suggests, it is logical that this research follows a chronological timeline to pinpoint the exact times in which the participants have reflected on for their identity shifts. Consequently, it signifies the process that they perceive which reflects on how they realize this process and how they see themselves as professional supervisors. In the following sections, all the themes are presented. Relevant comments of the participants from the interviews are presented in quotation marks along with the interpretations confirmed by the participants.

3.1 *A Supervisor as a Former Teacher*

Typically, all supervisors in our local context were previous teachers who excelled in their work. As established in literature review above, past experiences impact future ones. In order to cover the impact of POCs on their professional identity, it was important to take a look into the supervisors past experiences. To that end, the first question of this research is about the perceptions of supervisors regarding the role of POCs in shaping their professional identities. At the beginning of the first interview with each of the participants and aiming for a common ground as a launch-pad for a mutual understanding of the concept of professional identity, I asked the participants about their personal views on this concept and how it would be different than their identity in general. With a clear reference to the first predetermined theme which is 'the supervisor as a previous teacher', all the participants agreed on one fundamental aspect which is their experiences of previous POCs as teachers. This aspect constitutes a clear reference to how supervisors look at and understand their professional career.

3.1.1 Past Experience

During the interviews, both of the participants, S1 and S2, reflected on their experiences of their first POCs as teachers and how these first POCs played an important role in their professional identity as teachers and later on as supervisors. The most significant impact of the participants first POCs as teachers was the memory that they held with them whether that memory was pleasant or bad. The participants responses to one of the interviews questions, which was about whether or not they have experienced any transformational change during past POCs, were critical to understand their current supervision practices which was reflected on their professional identity.

Both of the participants specified certain incidents that were imprinted in their memories. S1 described his first ever POC as "baffling and full of negative feelings". The reason was that his first supervisor overwhelmed him by only pointing out negative observation notes which made S1 "confused" about the aim of that POC and "unconfident" of his work as a teacher. This specific POC related memory was the reason behind one of his later practices in supervision which is his decision to "make sure that none of the teachers he supervises feel the same as he did in that first POC". Moreover, his enthusiasm was apparent when he mentioned this point, which clearly shows how the negative proceedings of one particular POC have undoubtedly influenced the construction of his professional identity.

On the other hand, S2 remembered one contrasting and desirable transformational change that happened during a past POC at the time when he was a teacher. This particular memory caused him to almost "mimic" its proceedings in his current practice as a supervisor. He reminisced on one POC event that he had as a teacher which, in his words he "always cherishes" and which made a long-lasting effect on his "professional career", or else professional identity. This emotional reminiscing clearly signifies how past experiences during POCs could have a tremendous impact on professional identity.

Again, the impact of POCs continues not only to be in accordance with Dewey's concept of experiential continuum (1997) which motivated this research, but also in accordance with all the literature that was mentioned above in the literature review which asserts that interactions and emotions may influence future professional undertakings (Urzúa and Vásquez 2008; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Tateo, 2012; Barkhuizen, 2016; Ivanova & Skara-MincLne, 2016; Donaghue 2018; Cheng, 202; Gholami et al., 2021).

3.2 *A Novice Supervisor*

embarking on a new practice is overwhelming particularly when the new job sometimes requires not only interacting with old colleagues, but also evaluating their work. In addition, supervision involves roles that exceed traditional teaching duties, such as creating and maintaining professional discourse with school officials as well as handling resistance and issues of relations with teachers they supervise among which are experienced and novice teachers (Orland-Barak, 2006).

Once more, both of the participants highlighted the significance of their first POCs as new supervisors. Moreover, they reflected on how their past professional relationships with teachers and the different than anticipated practices of supervisors have played a fundamental role in their professional identity formation. As supervisors who are trying to make their ways in the profession, both of the participants mentioned incidents that occurred during their first POCs which were challenging and interesting to remember.

3.2.1 Past Professional Relationships

On the one hand, S1 commented on how the first POC that he held with a past colleague was “different” than other POCs that he previously conducted with teachers who he did not know before. He explained that this specific POC has added an “extra layer of knowledge” which helped him advance his understanding of himself as a supervisor today. Further, S1 described how it was “difficult” for him to “manoeuvre past his personal acquaintance” and go straight to delivering crucial feedback remarks. This first incident is crucial to professional identity formation since it added a substantial data about how to deal with such instance as a supervisor.

On the other hand, S2 described his first POC with a teacher, whom he has previously known on a professional level, as “critical and awkward” which required him to “contemplate about it” after his actual visit to the school. He reflected on this specific POC as he recalled how it “necessitated changes in his overall perspective of supervision” and what he would deal with in order to be a professional supervisor. Accordingly, the fact that S2 had to put an extra effort of contemplation as well as his conflicting feelings towards the profession were necessary in order to carry out the proceedings of such events shows how past relationships play a fundamental role in the professional identity formation in regard to POCs conducted with teachers that supervisors have known before.

As established earlier, interaction as a social and professional concept, which is a prominent human behaviour, is a major factor that impacts identity formation in general and professional identity in particular (Wenger 1998; Gee 2000; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Edwards & Burns, 2016). In this case, the rules that usually govern professional interactions during POCs were altered due to the fact that the participants had previously known each other on a professional level.

3.2.2 Unanticipated Practices

Both of the participants agreed on the fact that basically being a supervisor has more than meets the eye. They commented on several incidents where they had to “cut a POC short” because of other required supervision duties. Further, S1 stated how sometimes being “unprofessional in one work related aspect is in fact very professional in another” when it comes to the overall understanding of supervision. Thus, his recollection of several incidents that required him to haste the proceedings of POCs, in order to catch up with a sudden meeting for instance, signifies how such unanticipated practices frame the way he carries out such events.

In addition, the realization of such unanticipated POCs proceedings shows how supervisors perceive themselves as professionals. Accordingly, and in reference to “shortened POCs and/or online ones”, S2 maintained that such incidents contributed to his “perception of his supervision as a profession” and made him realize how certain job duties can have an “overwhelming impact” on other job duties and consequently on his identity as a supervisor. From a professional standpoint and as a supervisor, I can relate to how such detailed circumstances can have an impact on one’s career, hence one’s professional identity.

Thus, the significance of these incidents arises in the fact that both of the participants referred to them when asked about what would make POCs more productive. With that said, unanticipated practices during POCs are clearly one of the factors which have inclined supervisors to make professional amendments that helped in shaping the process of their professional identity progression. Also, acquiring the ability to deal with and perform unanticipated practices during such a professional interaction adds to the value of POCs and their impact on the professional identity of supervisors. Thus, the process in which one needs to acquire such professional knowledge indicates that professional identity is dynamic and not static (Irby, 2011; Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012; Izadinia, 2014). Also, being in the contexts in which individuals interact professionally,

such as POCs, help them start identifying and developing a particular professional identity (Lammert et al., 2020).

3.3 An Experienced Supervisor

Being supervisors for at least thirteen years, the participants have accumulated an efficient level of educational supervision's knowledge for them to be identified as experienced supervisors. Even though, they are still aware of the fact that their professional identity is far from being complete in the sense that they are still making decisions when it comes to the way they are handling POCs in a professional manner. That is to say, both of the participants shared stories of how they still experience hard times during the proceedings of POCs that are held with defensive teachers, whether the teachers are experienced or highly qualified teachers. Phrases like "it is difficult to change attitudes" and "judgmental and prejudices" appeared in relation to memories concerning POCs that were held with teachers who had a self-justifying or self-protective stance to the proceedings of POCs with visiting supervisors.

3.3.1 Changing Attitudes

Attitudes are considered mental predispositions, which refers to an individual's tendency to respond in a certain manner, whether favourable or unfavourable, towards a certain feature of an object, an individual, or an event (Anghelache & Bențea, 2012; Sharbain & Tan, 2012). Further, attitudes might be looked at as a mixture of cognitive, affective, and behavioural components in regard to dealing with a certain thing, although the three components do not usually appear in a perfect balance (Issan et al., 2012; Sharbain & Tan, 2012). For instance, some scholars assert that some techniques which supervisors might use during POCs proceedings, such as WH. questions that are used as an initial query, were often met with a non-embracing attitude and were looked at by teachers as inferences for lack of knowledge that could lead to negative evaluation (Kim & Silver, 2016). Consequently, dealing with teachers that respond with an unfavourable manner to supervisors' visits, particularly during POCs, is challenging.

S2 elaborated on how "frustrating" it is to have repeated POCs with teachers how do not like supervisors' visits for one reason or the other. Moreover, he explained that even though he has "almost seen it all when it comes to POCs", he is still "making whatever appropriate changes" which are "needed" when conducting such events with defensive teachers. Further, S2 described how he usually spends considerable amount of time "reflecting" on such events. He also revealed that sometimes he resorts to asking for "support" from other fellow supervisors regarding "alternative methods" for conducting POCs that are likely to be on the defensive side of interaction.

Likewise, S1 stated that "typical tactics may not be helpful" as he remembered some POCs held with "experienced" or "highly qualified" teachers who opt for the defensive during professional interactions. Also, when asked about the effect of the negotiation of power during POCs, S1 mentioned that such particular professional events come with their "unique challenges" that require "unprecedented accommodation", knowing that they usually take place at least twice each year. He stated that only through "relating to what teachers say" and "trial and error" he sometimes manages to succeed in achieving productive POCs.

In accordance to supervisors' perceived knowledge mentioned in the literature review above (Park et al., 1988; Yuan, 2016; Farrell, 2018), sometimes supervisors come to schools preoccupied as in having thoughts about the teachers they are about to visit. Whether these thoughts are due to past experiences with the same teachers or due to unfounded information drifting between supervisors, they usually have some unsought for effects on POCs and their overall quality. Further, the reason behind these effects is not that these thoughts are being facts but for the supervisors being humanly disposed towards reacting upon such information.

In response to a question about the negotiation of power during POCs, the prejudice was expected as a theme since experienced supervisors have had their share of visiting and conducting POCs with the same teachers and eventually have framed some opinions about them. For instance, S1 stated that it is true that "sometimes he still has his own prejudices about some teachers he supervises" due to previously conducted POCs with them. Also, he acknowledges that these prejudices generally "steer the direction of POCs towards sometimes unintended outcomes", which adds to the significance of the nature of human interactions that have a direct effect on identity in general. Moreover, he pointed out that though he is "aware of these prejudices", he is still trying to come up with a "technique to avoid undesirable outcomes".

On the other hand, S2 continued on the same line of thought in response to the same question. He mentioned that previously conducted POCs "inform his thoughts" about future POCs. Moreover, he maintained that his preoccupied mind should be self-reflected upon through reflective practice. Also, he recognised the need for

dealing with such “unintentional prejudices” in a positive manner. He stated that the fact that he is “aware” of such prejudices requires him to “reflect more and to reach a level of flexibility” to accommodate such thoughts.

4. Conclusion

In the first interview, S1 explained how being ready in the period before deciding to be a supervisor constitutes the first shift of one’s professional identity. He stated that “for someone to be willing to undertake a different practice definitely requires being ready with a slightly different mindset” which clearly points to a certain modification in the professional identity of the yet-to-be a supervisor. Also, S1 explained how every profession necessitates different identity because of the different “practices and objectives” and this is why the moment one decides that they are ready to change profession is crucial to the formation process of their professional identity.

Likewise, S2 emphasized the importance of “being prepared for making the move from being a teacher to becoming a supervisor” which also highlights the significance of the central moment of the initial mindset shift between a teacher and a supervisor. He emphasized the intellectual shift that occurs when a teacher opts for “professional development” programs that are “more suitable for supervision rather than teaching”. In addition, S2 pointed out that once this shift occurred to him, and as a sign of being “ready”, he immediately started to discuss and ask about what does it take to become a supervisor, and this was a topic that he talked about with his colleagues as well as his supervisor.

Educational supervisors contribute significantly to the development of teachers’ professional competencies and the quality of their instructional practices through POCs. Although supervisors are usually abandoned in literature, literature that studies the formation of supervisors’ professional identity is scarce (Donaghue 2019; Donaghue, 2020). Moreover, and to the best of my knowledge, no research that studies the impact of POCs on the professional identity of supervisors was found during my reading of relevant literature. This thesis addressed this research gap by qualitatively examining factors that contribute to the professional identity of supervisors during POCs from the point of view of supervisors. Further, using a narrative inquiry design, which is suitable for chronologically establishing a timeline of events (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Clandinin, 2022), this study found that POCs have a significant impact on the professional identity formation of supervisors throughout the progression of their professional careers.

In the analysis, this paper demonstrated how the perceptions of two supervisors tend to agree that certain incidents, which occurred during the proceedings of POCs, have affected their overall understanding of the professional supervision and, in due course, have contributed in shaping their professional identity. Indeed, it is all about interactions that are taking place within professional events. In accordance with the relevant literature (Gee, 2000; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Donaghue, 2020), this paper has pointed out that interacting with others is fundamental to identity formation of supervisors. Moreover, it has been established that the quality of the interactions, whether social or professional, is usually determined by previous experiences, and the quality of current experiences lay the grounds for the quality of future ones (Dewey, 1997). That is to say, the impact of POCs continues to be in accordance with Dewey’s concept of experiential continuum (1997) which motivated this research in the first place, and with all the literature that was mentioned above in the literature review as well which asserts that interactions and emotions may influence future professional undertakings.

In addition, supervisors must be aware of the outcomes of their professional interactions with teachers. Not only do these interactions have an effect on teachers, but also on supervisors and on the professional identity of both. Finally, as mentioned above, several studies have implied that educators have to self-study their learning trajectories in order to enhance their practice (Pena & Almaguer, 2005; Scheeler et al., 2006; Soslau, 2015). With the process of self-studying for the sole purpose of improving one’s practice, one can only hope for a diverse set of professional interactions that could provide a unique professional path for improvement and development.

4.1 Implications of the Study

Changes in society are leading to new expectations in regard to the role of education and its desired results. Consequently, these changes demand new insights on supervision’s quality and supervisors’ competences. Therefore, there is an eminent need to have a more explicit description of what constitute quality in supervision. In addition, this paper shows that an investigation of the possible impact of different personal relationships in educational-professional contexts would be an appreciated addition as further research is needed.

Supervisors can facilitate the proceedings of POCs; however, this paper suggests that supervisors need to be aware that these POCs are not a straightforward information-seeking and information-providing events, but are interactional events which take place within the limitations of socio-professional settings that require certain

social skills. These skills can be seen as opportunities and areas for professional development programs that are aimed at novice and/or experienced supervisors. POCs can be seen as socio-professional events that have their own unique features. For this reason, each POC can be handled and thought of differently in terms of the preschool visits' procedures that supervisors might be able to do.

Establishing a professional development community for supervisors is vital when it comes to understanding and dealing with POC as a professional context. That is, scheduling weekly professional development meetings with supervisors from the same and/or different subjects, backgrounds, and experiences is extremely helpful in advancing supervision's practices in general and POCs proceedings in particular (Carter et al., 2023). These communities make planning, anticipating, and understanding POCs easier for supervisors which would in due course help make POCs more fruitful and constructive professional events.

Finally, reflective practice has proven to be a highly recommended, important, and a fit self-derived professional development tool (Farrell, 2011; Kim & Silver, 2016; Tonna et al., 2017; Glanz, 2021). Throughout the interviews conducted in this research, and by asking questions that provoked the participants to reflect on their practices, it was clear for the participants how important and beneficial it is for professionals to regularly self-reflect on their practices as a tool for improvement.

4.2 Limitations

Due to the fact that this study was conducted in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and its participants were only two male supervisors, its findings cannot be generalized. Also, further research is needed that includes female supervisors in the sample. In addition, the research design used in this paper established a relative timeline for professional identity formation in relation to careers in teaching and supervising which might suggest the significance of combining participants that are currently working as teachers in a different research design. Finally, studying POC through different theoretical lenses and different research methods should provide deeper insights to the phenomena. This would help practitioners in the field of educational supervision better advance their knowledge and practice.

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An Experimental Study on Career Experiential Teaching Mode for English Major Freshmen in Application-Oriented Colleges

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Abstract

To meet the demands of the market and society, application-oriented colleges must align their teaching with the real professional world, emphasizing the linkage with industry and actively engaging in career experiential teaching. This study aims to construct a career experiential teaching mode specifically tailored for English majors. After successfully constructing such a model, the author conducted an experimental study targeting freshmen majoring in English to assess its effectiveness in enhancing their career readiness and overall development. The participants were English major freshmen from the Class of 2022 at Guangzhou College of Commerce, enrolled in an Orientation course specifically designed to incorporate the experiential teaching model. After thoroughly analyzing questionnaire responses and students' training reports, the author discovered that students participating in the career experiential teaching mode exhibited greater engagement, motivation, and satisfaction with their learning experience. Furthermore, they demonstrated a deeper understanding of career-related concepts, improved practical skills, and comprehensive ability development. Therefore, it is concluded that this career experiential teaching mode effectively prepares students for successful careers and enhances their overall capabilities. This research adds empirical evidence to the existing knowledge base regarding the benefits of integrating career experiential teaching into higher education, providing valuable insights for educators to adopt in preparing students for a smooth transition into the workforce.

Keywords: freshmen of English majors, career experiential practice, vocational knowledge and skills

1. Introduction

The fundamental positioning of application-oriented undergraduate colleges is to serve the local economy and foster practical talents. According to Wang Qinglin's (2013) proposal, these colleges should establish application-driven training objectives and a professional structure aligned with social demands. This involves creating a collaborative learning-research platform and implementing a practical teaching system. The focus is on innovating teaching methodologies and talent development modes, with professional and comprehensive ability training forming the curriculum's core. The English professionals developed by these colleges must possess not only humanistic qualities but also practical application skills to meet real-world demands. Li Haihong (2017) emphasized that English major talent development should align with societal needs and support regional economic growth. The training approach should be scientific, innovative, and supportive of the talent development goals. Evidently, application-oriented undergraduate colleges prioritize the cultivation of professional, application, and practical abilities.

To cultivate applied talents and facilitate the transition of students from academic to professional settings, career experiential and practical teaching hold immense significance in application-oriented colleges. Primarily, career experiential teaching exposes students to the professional realm, offering a preview of professional content before employment. This is a crucial step in preventing mismatches in the talent market. Furthermore, career experiential teaching not only enhances students' comprehension of professional knowledge but also equips them with the ability to apply their acquired knowledge in practical settings. Career experiential teaching not only

cultivates their professional and practical abilities but also boosts their employment competitiveness. Ultimately, career experiential teaching fosters professional awareness, facilitates the selection of career paths, establishes clear career development directions, and enhances career adaptability among undergraduate college students, thereby preparing them for successful transitions into the professional world.

Given the critical importance of career experiential teaching in students' success, there's an urgent need to develop a career experiential teaching model. The objective of this study is to devise, implement, and evaluate such a model. Through this process, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of the proposed career experiential teaching model, thereby exploring the benefits of integrating it into higher education.

2. Research on Career Experiential Teaching at Home and Abroad

Foreign researchers have emphasized the significance of career experiential teaching. John J. Clayton (1981) advocated that seeing the work students do in English as connected to the work they plan to do after graduation should enrich both their study and their working lives. Teachers, therefore, must demonstrate how to establish linkages between their English studies and their entry into a career or pre-professional program. Bay, Jennifer (2006) has argued that college English educators need to develop their internship practice to meet the needs of their students, which will require a great deal of theorization and research on experiential learning. Furthermore, several researchers have delved into the theoretical and practical applications of career experiential teaching. Guile, David, and Griffiths, Toni (2001) have analyzed how students learn and achieve progress through work experience, proposing a connective model that highlights how work experience can enable students to take explicit account of the learning that occurs within and between the different contexts of education and work. Freeman, Edward (2012) has researched the design and implementation of a career orientation course that can increase students' awareness of potential careers following their undergraduate studies. Kitchen, Veronica (2022) has conducted a two-year study exploring students' perspectives on learning from short in-class games and simulations, revealing that these engaging activities effectively prepare students for internships, exchanges, and other experiential learning opportunities.

Many domestic researchers have designed a variety of teaching methods and used different teaching modes to study career experiential teaching. Liu Ziting (2012) advocated that higher vocational colleges ought to implement a structured career experiential education encompassing various stages like "pre-enrollment", "after-school activities," "winter and summer breaks," and "practical instruction." This approach would enable students to gradually fulfill the comprehensive quality standards of related industries and professions throughout their academic journey, thereby establishing a solid foundation for their transition from students to professionals and ultimately enhancing their employment prospects. Wang Yao (2013) emphasized the significance of career experiential education as a crucial approach to career planning and employment guidance in higher vocational colleges. He delved into the specific methods and strategies of implementing such education, encompassing its conceptual framework and functionalities, pre-admission experiential engagement, post-school experiential activities, and the pursuit of professional career experiential opportunities. Responding to the demands of practical teaching for logistics majors in higher vocational colleges, Zhang Xuebin (2015) explored and implemented a career experiential teaching mode specifically tailored for freshman students of logistics management. He researched and outlined the general operational process of this teaching model, further validating the positive impact of freshman career experiential practice in nurturing talents in the field of logistics management. Based on the concept of vocational experience education, Liu Huaping (2017) explored a career experiential teaching mode from the following aspects: the design of English occupational tasks, classroom language instruction centered around professional assignments, guiding students' extracurricular professional experiences aligned with these tasks, and the creation of language works tailored to specific professions. This comprehensive approach aims to offer fresh perspectives for the reform of English teaching in higher vocational colleges. Zhimin Yi (2018) conducted a study on the establishment of an experiential teaching framework for career planning among application-oriented undergraduate students, aiming to contribute valuable insights and references for the advancement of this endeavor. Zhang Xuebin (2020) devised a "four-stakeholder, six-stage" career experiential teaching mode specifically for freshmen in higher vocational colleges. This model seamlessly integrates the collaborative efforts of four key stakeholders: freshmen, teachers, enterprises, and schools. It encompasses six interconnected stages: information gathering, planning, decision-making, implementation, inspection, and evaluation. By implementing this model among freshman logistics management majors at Chongqing Three Gorges Vocational School, Zhang validated its effectiveness in supporting the teaching of career experiential courses for higher vocational freshmen. Utilizing virtual reality technology, Cai Huaxing (2023) successfully integrated the role-playing experiential teaching approach into the practical instruction of TCM medical records. By offering students an immersive role-playing experience within a virtual reality setting,

Cai facilitated their physical and mental engagement, fostering a profound sense of career mission.

Upon conducting a literature review on career experiential teaching, the author identifies several key issues: (1) While researchers have primarily focused on the vocational experience system, the scope of their inquiries remains broad, lacking specific frameworks for teaching modes and detailed implementation strategies. (2) Notably, the majority of career experiential teaching studies center around students in higher vocational colleges, with scant attention paid to those in applied undergraduate institutions. (3) Additionally, there is a significant scarcity of research exploring career experiential teaching practices for English majors. Given these gaps, it is imperative to delve into the design and implementation of career experiential teaching specifically tailored for English major freshmen in applied undergraduate colleges.

3. Research Methodology

This paper aims to devise a novel teaching mode for career experiential practice and evaluate its influence on students' academic achievements and professional preparedness. Consequently, it primarily explores two research questions: (1) How can teachers establish a teaching mode for career experiential practice tailored to English major freshmen, encompassing teaching objectives, methodologies, content modules, and an evaluation framework? (2) How does this career experiential teaching mode enhance students' readiness for the workplace and foster their comprehensive development?

To address the above research questions, the author adopted the following methodologies. Firstly, through literature research, the author and fellow teachers constructed a teaching mode for career experiential practice tailored to freshman English majors, guided by output-oriented theory and student-centered education principles. Additionally, teachers developed career experiential teaching resources and an information resource library to facilitate students' access to vocational knowledge during task completion. Secondly, a Quasi-experimental research method was used to test the research hypothesis that the career experiential teaching mode can enhance English majors' understanding of professional concepts, improve their practical skills, and prepare them better for future career opportunities. For this purpose, the author selected English major freshmen enrolled in the Orientation course at Guangzhou College of Commerce as our research subjects. Within this course, teachers implemented the designed teaching mode, actively engaging students in the process of program design and refining teaching contents and modules based on their valuable feedback. After finishing career experiential practice, students were asked to write a report on their performance of career experiential practice and finish a questionnaire survey. Finally, the author gathered quantitative data through questionnaires and qualitative data via writing reports, discussing and analyzing the results to draw meaningful conclusions.

The questionnaire consists of 17 single-choice questions, one multiple-choice question, and one open-ended question. The author ensured the validity and reliability of the survey through rigorous testing using SPSS software. As Table 1 demonstrates, the reliability coefficient stands at 0.805, exceeding the benchmark of 0.8, thus confirming the reliability of our research data. Similarly, Table 2 reveals a validity coefficient of 0.870, surpassing the threshold of 0.7, signifying strong validity and ensuring the extraction of meaningful and accurate data.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Number of items	Sample	Cronbach. α
17	227	0.805

Table 2. Validity analysis

KMO value	0.870	
	Approx. chi-square text	1917.480
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	136.000
	p value	0.000

4. The Construct of Career Experiential Teaching Mode for Freshmen

Drawing upon Chen Xiaofei's (2014) theory on teaching mode, which defines it as the structured design and organization of teaching activities guided by specific educational ideologies and theories, this paper theoretically constructs a comprehensive career experiential teaching mode encompassing the active participation of freshmen and teachers. Chen Xiaofei (2014) identifies five key elements of the teaching mode: theoretical basis, teaching objectives, implementation conditions (encompassing teachers, students, resources, content, methods, and tools necessary for achieving these objectives), implementation procedures (unique operational steps characterizing

the model), and evaluation. Consequently, the career experiential teaching mode elaborated in this paper incorporates these elements, encompassing the teaching's theoretical foundation, teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching steps, and evaluation.

The career experiential teaching mode proposed in this paper is a teaching approach rooted in real-world work scenarios. It is constructed on the foundation of task-driven courses, project-based learning, and courses that systematize work processes, all guided by the principles of output-oriented theory and student-centered education. In this mode, teachers devise tailored career experiential tasks for students, who, in turn, immerse themselves in these scenarios to perceive work demands. They refine work tasks according to these demands and subsequently decompose and acquire knowledge points pertinent to specific work tasks.

The establishment of specific teaching objectives for various occupations is grounded in market research, identifying the specific needs of the market for English translation talents, English teacher talents, and business English talents. Teaching steps are systematized, from career investigation, career experiential program planning, and career experiential practice, to writing reports on career experiential practice, and evaluation of career experiential practice. The teaching contents are modularized, providing students with multiple career experiential modules to choose from. A standardized evaluation system is established to shift from summative evaluation to formative evaluation. Furthermore, diversified teaching resources are being developed, including the construction of a career experiential information resource database and online courses dedicated to vocational experience.

4.1 Concrete Teaching Objectives

The overall teaching goals encompass multiple dimensions. Ideologically and morally, the aims are to foster interest in English learning, cultivate the aspiration to bridge Chinese and Western cultures, instill a love for university life, and instill a diligent learning attitude aimed at future contributions to the country. In terms of knowledge, the goals are to comprehend the prospects of the major, establish a professional framework, and gain insights into the prospects of career planning. For abilities, the focus is on enhancing independent and collaborative learning capabilities. Quality-oriented objectives involve nurturing communication abilities, fostering teamwork and negotiation qualities, and promoting overall personal development. Specifically, the teaching objectives for vocational experience in diverse directions are collaboratively developed by freshmen and teachers, who also devise plans for practical career experiential teaching activities.

4.2 Systematization of Teaching Steps

With the collaboration of freshmen, teachers, and the school, the systematic teaching approach consists of six sequential steps. Freshmen first conduct industry and market research on their majors, followed by collaborating with teachers to devise a career experiential plan and submitting it to the school for review. Next, freshmen engage in career experiential practice under the guidance of teachers, adhering to the approved plan. Subsequently, they compile a report detailing the challenges and achievements encountered during the practice. Teachers then evaluate the students' performance, while freshmen conduct a self-evaluation. Finally, freshmen formulate their career development plan and outline plans for continued career experiential practice.

4.3 Modularization of Teaching Contents

Based on an industry survey conducted by freshmen, freshmen collaborate with teachers to establish the plan for career experiential practice and design diverse career experiential modules. Subsequently, students in groups select a module to complete, allowing them to gain practical experience in their chosen career paths.

4.3.1 English Teaching Experiential Practice

This task is designed to enhance students' comprehension of the teaching profession through hands-on experience. It aims to provide students with an initial understanding of the skills and knowledge they must cultivate over the next four years to become teachers. Concurrently, it fosters their teamwork skills, independent analytical abilities, and problem-solving capabilities. Units 5, 7, and 8 of the Oxford Shanghai Edition English textbook for grade 8 are chosen as teaching contents. Students are organized into six groups within each class, with each group assigned a unit to teach. Additionally, every two groups will teach the same unit, allowing for comparative learning. Each unit comprises six modules, encompassing reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, and additional practice/culture corner activities. Each student within the group is assigned the task of teaching a specific module, ensuring a comprehensive and diverse learning experience.

4.3.2 English Translation Experiential Practice

The objective of this task is to enhance students' practical translation skills, post-translation editing abilities, and translation appreciation through collaborative group work. By engaging in the translation, revision, post-translation editing, and appreciation of various texts, students will develop their independent and collaborative learning capabilities, fostering a deeper enthusiasm for English learning. Additionally, this task provides students with an immersive experience of the daily work of professional translators, allowing them to gain insights into the specific processes and considerations involved in translation work. Through this experience, students will gain a profound understanding of the role of professional translators, serving as inspiration for their future career planning and choices.

For this exercise, diverse translation materials have been selected, including texts from literature, business, news, and speeches. Each text is approximately 500-800 words. These materials will initially be translated using online translation software, followed by manual modifications. Deliberate errors in vocabulary, word meaning, part of speech, terminology, logic, format, and style will be introduced to challenge students. Groups of 5-6 students will work collaboratively to translate, revise, edit, and appreciate the chosen material. Upon completion, each group will submit a revised translation with revision traces, an unedited translation, a translation report, and a verbal presentation explaining the rationales and processes behind their revisions.

4.3.3 Experiential Practice in the Direction of Business English: Cross-border E-commerce Live Broadcasting

Colleges and universities should embrace the concept of technology communication and explore an innovative talent training mode that combines "language, technology, and practice," with the goal of nurturing high-level, application-oriented talents in information technology language services for the IT era. Given the advent of the Internet and the emergence of cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting, a novel form of e-commerce live broadcasting has arisen. Live streaming with product promotion has become a prominent marketing model, creating a demand for cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting talents in the job market. Consequently, a task integrating technology and product dissemination has been devised. Through experiencing cross-border e-commerce live streaming assignments, students can acquire knowledge about the industry and grasp the skill requirements for such occupations. They must possess fluent English communication abilities and cross-cultural communication skills to comprehend cultural differences.

Students should undertake this assignment in groups of 2 to 4 individuals, with one person assuming the role of the host, another as the assistant, and the remaining members either handling planning and writing duties or simulating consumers interacting with the host. Each group is free to choose any product of their interest for promotion. The English product promotion, to be completed within a five-minute timeframe, needs to be appealing, attractive, and interactive.

4.3.4 Experiential Practice in the Direction of Business English: Canton Fair Scene Simulation

The purpose of this task is to simulate the trading environment of the Canton Fair, allowing students to collaborate and communicate by assuming various roles (buyer, seller, trading company, translator, etc.) until an order is finalized. This immersive experience enables students to actively comprehend international trade rules and terminology, thereby guiding them in their career planning.

In groups of five to six, students collaborate to depict stories unfolding both on and behind the scenes of the Canton Fair. Students are presented with three distinct branded companies to choose from, all leading domestic private enterprises in their respective industries. They may select from three corporate brands and craft their own scripts. The task progresses in three stages: before the Canton Fair, sellers prepare exhibition items, email customers, extend invitations, and communicate exhibition details such as time, location, and booth information. During the event, buyers visit the seller's exhibition area, browse displays, inquire about pricing, and initiate preliminary collaborations (students devise their own communication content, including inquiries about MOQ, FOB, etc.). Following the Fair, sellers proactively reach out to buyers to facilitate further cooperation, such as contract signing and order placement.

4.3.5 Experiential Practice of English-speaking Tour Guides

English is extensively utilized in the tour guides service industry as the international language, and English majors may also pursue a career as English-speaking tour guides. This assignment helps students recognize their role as bridges for cross-cultural communication and promoters of Chinese culture. Through this experimental career practice, students can strengthen their cultural self-confidence and be inspired to become cultural ambassadors, furthering China's influence on a global scale and fostering a deeper understanding of China worldwide.

Students should collaborate in groups of two to four. Each student will present on Chinese excellent culture for 2 minutes in English. They are required to collaboratively prepare a PPT presentation and deliver their speech without referring to a script. Students should endeavor to highlight distinctive Chinese elements and showcase outstanding cultural aspects. The chosen materials can include historical anecdotes, cuisine, architecture, intangible cultural heritage, cultural traditions, landmarks, and so on.

4.4 Standardization of Teaching Evaluation System

Teaching evaluation comprises both the teacher's formative assessment and students' self-evaluation. The teacher's formative assessment encompasses students' entire engagement in career experiential practice, including the vocational survey report (20%), career experiential practice plan (20%), actual career experiential practice (20%), career experiential practice report (20%), and career development plan (20%). The teacher evaluates and gives scores to students based on their performance in these five components. Additionally, students conduct self-evaluations using the same criteria.

4.5 Diversification of Teaching Resource Construction

To establish a vocational experience framework and provide students with invaluable resources during their career experiential practice, enabling them to accomplish their tasks more effectively, teachers must undertake the development and creation of an experiential information resource library and online courses in vocational English. For instance, to enhance students' teaching practice, teachers may offer exemplary lesson plans for primary and secondary school English, outstanding teaching videos, and bibliographies on teaching methodologies for their reference and learning. Similarly, for translation-related career experiential practices, teachers can provide students with books on translation techniques and exemplary translation models. These materials can progressively accumulate to form a comprehensive information resource library. Additionally, teachers can record video lessons on professional English, covering topics like preparing an English resume, writing a job application letter in English, and preparing for job interviews, thereby gradually building and enriching vocational English online courses.

5. The Results of the Questionnaire Survey and Writing Reports

Approximately 227 freshmen English majors, spread across six classes of 2022 at Guangzhou College of Commerce, engaged in career experiential practice during the freshman orientation course. Based on their industry survey, it was observed that most English majors pursue careers as English teachers, interpreters, or employees in foreign-related sectors. Collaboratively, students and teachers devised four career experiential tasks, namely, English teaching, English translation, business English, and English tour guiding. The business English task encompassed cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting and Canton Fair scene simulation. Groups of students selected a career experiential module to undertake. Following a week of group preparation, they accomplished their tasks in the classroom. Upon completion, they were required to fill out a questionnaire survey and compose a performance report.

5.1 The Results of the Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey has been completed by 227 students, and the results will be analyzed based on three main aspects: career plans, the effectiveness of career experiential practice, and reflections on task performance during this practice.

5.1.1 The Career Plans

The initial four survey questions aim to ascertain whether students have a clear idea about their desired career path. Tables 3 and 4 reveal that 74.45% of students had a career in mind when selecting English as their major, while 76.65% decided on their career choice after undergoing career experiential practice. This suggests that the career experiential practice has assisted at least 2.2% of students in clarifying their future careers.

Question 1: Did you have a specific career in mind when applying for college and choosing your major?

Table 3. Results of Question One

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Yes	169	74.45%
No	58	25.55%

Question 2: Have you decided what career you want to pursue after completing career experiential practice?

Table 4. Results of Question Two

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Yes	174	76.65%
No	53	23.35%

When asked what career they want to pursue, 52.86% of students expressed a desire to become teachers, 20.26% want to be interpreters, 11.45% aspire to work as clerks in foreign trade companies and 3.96% of students want to become civil servants.

Question 3: What career do you want to pursue?

Table 5. Results of question three

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Teachers	120	52.86%
Interpreters	46	20.26%
Foreign trade clerks	26	11.45%
Civil servants	9	3.96%
Others	26	11.45%

Therefore Table 6 reveals that approximately 46.26% of students chose English teaching tasks, 18.5% selected English translation tasks and 14.1% chose English-speaking tour guide tasks during career experiential practice. A smaller proportion, about 6.61% of students undertook cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting tasks, while approximately 8.37% participated in Canton Fair simulation tasks.

Question 4: Which task did you choose to undertake during your career experiential practice?

Table 6. Results of Question Four

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
English teaching	105	46.26%
English translation	42	18.5%
Canton fair scene simulation	19	8.37%
Cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting	15	6.61%
English-speaking tour guide	32	14.1%
Others	14	6.17%

5.1.2 The Effectiveness of Career Experiential Practice

As is shown in Table 7, approximately 83.26% of students strongly believe that organizing freshmen to engage in career experiential practice is crucial, as it aids in comprehending and experiencing their future professions. Roughly 11.01% of students find the practice necessary, only regarding the school-organized vocational experience as a mere formality with limited benefit. About 5.29% of students remain indifferent, uncertain of its necessity. Only 0.44% of students deem the practice unnecessary and consider it a waste of time.

Question 5: Do you believe it is essential for the College to arrange for freshmen to undergo career experiential practice?

Table 7. Results of Question Five

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
It's very necessary, which can help us understand and experience the career to be engaged in the future.	189	83.26%
It is necessary, but the vocational experience practice organized by the school is just a formality, which is not helpful.	25	11.01%
I have no idea about it, and I don't know whether it's necessary.	12	5.29%
There's no need and it's a waste of time.	1	0.44%

By analyzing the responses to questions 6 through 10, a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on the effectiveness of career experiential practice can be gained. Table 8 reveals that roughly 74% of students have reported significant gains from their career experiential practice, 25.11% have reaped some benefits, and only 0.88% claim to have gained nothing.

Question 6: Do you feel that you have gained something from career experiential practice?

Table 8. Results of Question Six

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Yes, I have gained a lot	46	20.26%
Yes, I have gained relatively a lot	122	53.74%
Yes, I have gained a little	57	25.11%
No, I have gained nothing	2	0.88%

Table 9 presents a comprehensive overview of students' perspectives regarding the impacts of vocational experience. Approximately 85.9% of students agree that career experiential practice fosters their drive to acquire professional knowledge, enabling them to grasp the linkage between their field of study and potential career paths. An overwhelming 91.63% of students believe that such practical experiences help them realize their lack of professional knowledge and ability, thereby boosting their motivation and zeal to diligently pursue further studies in their field. Similarly, 90.3% of students agree that career experiential practice can help them understand and experience the career they want to engage in in the future. Lastly, 90.22% of students maintain that career experiential practice aids in swiftly determining their vocational direction, paving the way for early career planning preparations.

Question 7: Career experiential practice can stimulate my motivation to learn professional knowledge, and make me preliminarily realize the connection between major and career.

Question 8: Career experiential practice can help me realize my lack of professional knowledge and ability, and stimulate the motivation and enthusiasm to study professional knowledge hard.

Question 9: Career experiential practice can help me understand and experience the career I want to engage in in the future.

Question 10: Career experiential practice can help me establish my career direction as soon as possible and make preliminary preparations for my career planning.

Table 9. Results of questions seven, eight, nine, ten

Options	Totally agree (Proportion)	Agree (Proportion)	Don't know (Proportion)	Disagree (Proportion)	Totally disagree (Proportion)
Question 7	41.41%	44.49%	13.66%	0%	0.44%
Question 8	47.14%	44.49%	7.93%	0%	0.44%
Question 9	44.49%	45.81%	8.81%	0.44%	0.44%
Question 10	44.93%	42.29%	12.33%	0%	0.44%

5.1.3 The Reflections on Task Performance during the Practice

According to Table 10, only 11.01% of students regard their performance as excellent, while 44.05% believe they have done a decent job. However, 40.53% of students feel their performance was mediocre, expressing dissatisfaction. Additionally, 4.41% of students consider their performance to be very poor.

Question 11. How well do you feel you have accomplished your vocational experience?

Table 10. Results of question eleven

Options	Subtotal	Proportion
Very well	25	11.01%
Relatively well	100	44.05%
Just so so	92	40.53%
Badly	10	4.41%
Very badly	0	0%

According to the survey, 39.21% of students identified a lack of expertise as the biggest difficulty they faced during the task. Additionally, 28.63% of students viewed their limited language expression ability as the primary difficulty, while 26.87% of students pointed to a deficiency in vocational skills.

Question 12: What is the biggest difficulty you have encountered in the process of vocational experience practice?

Table 11. Results of question twelve

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
Lack of expertise	89	39.21%
Lack of vocational skills	61	26.87%
Insufficient group communication and collaboration	12	5.29%
Lack of language expression ability	65	28.63%

Upon reflecting on the contributions of their group members and instructors, 85.46% of students agree that most of the group members were able to actively participate in the discussion during career experiential practice and 84.58% of students think that teachers provide enough information resources for their reference and learning.

Question 13: In the process of vocational experience, most of the group members were able to actively participate in the discussion.

Question 14: In the process of vocational experience, teachers provide enough information resources for my reference and learning.

Table 12. Results of questions thirteen and fourteen

Options	Totally agree (Proportion)	Agree (Proportion)	Don't know (Proportion)	Disagree (Proportion)	Totally disagree (Proportion)
Question 13	37.44%	48.02%	13.66%	0.44%	0.44%
Question 14	40.53%	44.05%	14.1%	0%	1.32%

5.1.4 The Significance of the Questionnaire Survey's Findings

The significance of the above findings lies in several crucial aspects that highlight the value of career experiential practice for students, thus answering the second research question. Firstly, the overwhelming agreement among students regarding the necessity of career experiential practice underscores its importance in their educational journey. The need for such experiences is evident, as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This practice serves as evidence of the successful implementation of career experiential training, emphasizing the profound necessity for its continued implementation. Secondly, career experiential practice plays a pivotal role in shaping students' career plans. By participating in these experiences, students gain clarity about their desired career paths. For instance, those interested in becoming English teachers or translators can choose relevant experiential tasks, thus gaining practical insights into their chosen professions. Thirdly, the positive impact of career experiential practice on students' understanding and motivation is remarkable. It not only helps them recognize their professional knowledge and ability gaps but also spurs them to study harder with more enthusiasm. This awareness and subsequent action are crucial for their professional development. Furthermore, career experiential practice facilitates the establishment of career directions and preliminary career planning. Students can make informed decisions about their future paths, based on practical experiences and insights gained through these practices. Lastly, the students' self-assessment of their task performance, coupled with the identified challenges they faced, provides valuable insights for future improvements. The lack of expertise, language expression ability, and vocational skills highlighted by students points to areas that need to be addressed in future career experiential practices. At the same time, the positive feedback on group discussions and teachers' support suggests that these aspects of the practice are effective and should be continued.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the crucial role of career experiential practice in enhancing students' understanding of their future careers, shaping their career plans, and motivating them to pursue professional development. These practices not only provide practical experiences but also foster the development of students' essential skills and abilities that are vital for success in the workplace.

5.2 The Results of Writing Reports

Following the career experiential practice, students collaboratively wrote reports detailing their experiences. These reports were subsequently analyzed by using NVivo12.0 qualitative analysis software.

5.2.1 Enhancing Career Awareness

A significant number of students expressed in their career experience practice reports that the hands-on practice not only sparked their career awareness but also broadened their vocational knowledge, allowed them to exercise vocational skills, facilitated career planning, and fostered a deeper comprehension of diverse careers.

Table 13. Number of reference points of child nodes (Career awareness)

Father node	Child node	Files	Reference points
	Vocational knowledge	7	10
Career awareness	Vocational skills	6	12
	Career plan	6	11
	Career understanding	10	27

Table 13 illustrates the impact of career experiential practice on students' career awareness through 60 reference points. The majority of students reported gaining a profound understanding of various careers through this practice, as evidenced by 27 reference points. Specific examples include a deeper comprehension of teaching professions, international trade exchanges, and the challenges faced by translators. Additionally, 12 reference points highlight improvements in vocational skills, such as office and teaching skills, as well as mastery of live commerce techniques. 11 reference points demonstrate the guiding role of vocational experience in shaping future career plans and choices, with students gaining preliminary insights into their post-graduation career options and setting goals accordingly. Furthermore, 10 reference points indicate an expansion of vocational knowledge following the experiential practice, including the acquisition of professional English knowledge and foreign trade understanding, along with the identification of knowledge gaps for future study.

5.2.2 Improving Comprehensive Abilities

Their practice reports indicate that the majority of students believe career experiential practice contributes significantly to improving their comprehensive abilities, including teamwork ability, speaking ability, practical ability, logical thinking ability, the ability to make immediate responses, presentation skills, creative ability, and problem-solving ability.

Table 14. Number of reference points of child nodes (Comprehensive ability)

Father node	Child node	Files	Reference points
Comprehensive ability	Presentation skill	2	3
	Problem-solving ability	1	2
	Team-work ability	14	35
	The ability to make an immediate response	3	4
	Practical ability	4	5
	Logical thinking ability	4	6
	Creative ability	2	2
	Speaking ability	10	37

Table 14 reveals the profound effects of career experiential practice on students' comprehensive abilities, totaling 94 reference points. Specifically, 35 reference points indicate an enhancement in teamwork ability. Students report that they have cultivated their cooperation and communication skills, and have come to appreciate the excellence and efficiency attained through collaboration. Many students describe collective activities as unforgettable and beneficial experiences during their university years. Additionally, 37 reference points suggest remarkable improvements in speaking ability. Students highlight how career experiential practice has refined their language skills, making them more fluent and authentic in discussions. 6 reference points also demonstrate the development of logical thinking ability, with students recognizing the value of vocational experience in practicing their oral English and boosting their logical thinking for future academic and career growth. Moreover,

5 reference points indicate advancements in practical abilities, as students report gaining valuable skills and an explorer's spirit through vocational experiences.

5.2.3 Enhancing Awareness Regarding the Division of Group Work and Cooperation

In their practice reports, numerous students elaborate on their experiences from the aspect of team cooperation, as evidenced by 48 reference points listed in Table 15.

Table 15. Number of reference points of child nodes (Division of group work)

Father node	Child node	Files	Reference points
Division of group work	The specific division of work	13	20
	Clear division of work	5	13
	Good cooperation	5	5
	The importance of division of work and cooperation	7	10

20 reference points indicate that almost every group has emphasized the importance of a specific division of labor within group work. Each group member assumes responsibility for a distinct role, such as information collector, PPT creator, scriptwriter, presenter, and more. Many students think that there is a clear division of work among group members, which is shown in 13 reference points. For instance, group members have clearly defined responsibilities for the teaching experiential assignment, and everyone contributes to the success of the career experiential practice. Throughout the experiential practice of English-speaking tour guides, the emphasis on the organized allocation of tasks among group members has cultivated a harmonious and collaborative working environment. Team members enthusiastically and patiently assist each other with any questions or uncertainties that arise. 5 reference points highlight the exemplary cooperation achieved to accomplish group work, demonstrating strong team interaction and collaboration. 10 reference points reflect students' recognition of the significance of task division and cooperation. For example, students report experiencing the value of teamwork in career experiential practice, which not only yields better outcomes but also fosters a sense of collective pride. They have come to appreciate the importance of teamwork and are committed to more actively collaborating with their team members in the future.

5.2.4 Recognizing the Deficiency of Their Performance in Career Experiential Practice

The majority of students have acknowledged and reflected upon the deficiencies in their performance during career experiential practice, as indicated by 41 reference points listed in Table 16.

Table 16. Number of reference points of child nodes (The deficiency of their performance)

Father node	Child node	Files	Reference points
The deficiency in their performance	Insufficient time allocation	2	2
	Lack of confidence	2	2
	Lack of communication	4	11
	Lack of details in content	6	8
	Poor English oral expression	11	18

Some students have expressed concerns about their limited oral English proficiency, as evidenced by 18 reference points. One student recounted their experience as a buyer at the Canton Fair, realizing that real-life oral English communication is more challenging than anticipated, highlighting the need to enhance their language skills. Additionally, 11 reference points indicate a lack of communication among group members, leading to content overlap and emphasizing the importance of collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, 8 reference points reveal that their presentations lacked depth and detail, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive introduction of topics and product selling points. Lastly, 2 reference points highlight students' lack of confidence and difficulty in managing time during their presentations.

5.2.5 The Significance of Findings Derived from Writing Reports on Career Experiential Practice

The significance of the above findings from students' writing reports regarding career experiential practice is multifaceted. Firstly, the successful implementation of career experiential practice with desirable teaching effects demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing students' career awareness. By providing students with hands-on experience in various careers, they can gain a deeper understanding of different professions,

practice their vocational skills, and make informed career plans for the future. This not only equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills but also helps them to make more informed decisions about their future career paths. Secondly, the cultivation of comprehensive abilities through career experiential practice is crucial for students' personal and professional development. The improvement in teamwork ability and speaking ability, along with the enhancement of logical thinking, practical skills, presentation skills, and problem-solving abilities, equips students with a range of skills that are highly valued in today's workplace. These abilities not only help them to perform well in their current roles but also prepare them for future challenges and opportunities. Thirdly, the awareness of the division of group work and cooperation that career experiential practice has aroused among students is essential for effective teamwork. The recognition of the importance of clear work division and seamless cooperation among group members promotes a positive team culture where everyone contributes to the overall success of the team. This awareness fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability among students, encouraging them to work together towards shared goals. Finally, the reflection on deficiencies in performance during career experiential practice is invaluable for students' personal growth and development. By identifying areas where they need improvement, such as speaking English or communication skills, students can take proactive steps to address these weaknesses. This self-awareness and willingness to improve are crucial for continuous personal development and success in future career endeavors.

In summary, the significance of these findings lies in their ability to demonstrate the benefits of career experiential practice for students' career awareness, comprehensive abilities, teamwork skills, and personal growth. This approach not only enhances their educational experience but also prepares them for successful futures in their chosen profession.

6. Conclusion

This paper constructs a novel teaching mode for career experiential practice, featuring well-defined teaching objectives, systematic teaching steps, modularized contents, and a standardized evaluation system. This mode offers insights into how experiential teaching can seamlessly integrate into the educational framework. Our findings provide invaluable guidance for educators and administrators who are keen on adopting experiential teaching in their institutions. By applying this model to actual teaching scenarios, its effectiveness in enhancing students' career readiness and overall development has been thoroughly explored. The findings are promising: this approach notably benefits students' career progression and self-awareness. Through experiential learning, students gain a profound comprehension of career principles and practical workplace skills, leading to tangible improvements in their practical abilities, overall quality, academic interest, and teamwork capabilities. The positive results underscore the value of experiential teaching in career education.

However, there are limitations of this study to consider. Firstly, the sample size and diversity are restricted, potentially limiting the generalizability of our findings. To address this, future studies should aim to include a more diverse and representative sample, encompassing different educational levels, disciplines, and backgrounds. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of experiential teaching across various contexts. Secondly, the study's duration was relatively brief, possibly missing out on the longer-term impacts of this teaching method. Extended observation periods in future research would help assess the sustainability and enduring benefits of experiential learning.

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Traditional and Current Perspectives on Pronunciation Teaching

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Abstract

Pronunciation is an important factor in the teaching of a second or a foreign language. This paper tries to summarize the traditional methods and approaches used and highlight the modern and current ones for teaching pronunciation. This paper advocates the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach that makes use of psychology, instructional technology, and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). The aim is to encourage English language teachers to use innovative techniques for teaching pronunciation nowadays.

Keywords: pronunciation teaching, traditional, modern approaches, interdisciplinary approach, instructional technology

1. Introduction

Pronunciation is an essential element for the learning of oral speech in second and foreign language learning. Schmitt (2002) defines pronunciation as “a term used to capture all aspects of how we employ speech sounds for communication” (p. 219). It is a linguistic skill that involves learning to articulate and differentiate individual sounds and recognize the features of connected speech. Pronunciation has an important role in the learning process, as it helps the learner to better comprehend native speakers and native-like speakers appropriately. Pronunciation is required not merely for linguistics but for communicating and making meaning. Pica (1994) and Long (1996) argue that learners’ L2 development advances while communicating. In fact, teaching pronunciation is important for a successful oral communication to take place where clarity of the speech leads to mutual understanding. Yet, in the worst case, it leads to serious miscommunication and a misunderstanding.

A comprehensive input helps the learner and the speaker achieve mutual understanding. Proper pronunciation increases speech intelligibility. Accordingly, teachers must attribute proper importance to the teaching of pronunciation in their classes. The amount of time and effort allocated to teaching pronunciation depends on the teacher. Yet, teachers forget that English is the language of international and intercultural communication. Yates (2001) has shown that curricula, methodology, and the absence of proper materials, all gave rise to inadequacies of teaching and learning in the field. This paper tries to summarize the historical development of language theory and pedagogy and highlight the contemporary pronunciation teaching approaches and techniques.

2. Traditional Pronunciation Teaching Methods

Language teaching methods of pronunciation have changed relatively to each period. Different approaches and methods were developed by placing pronunciation either at the forefront of teaching or at the back and ignore its weight.

2.1 Pro-Pronunciation Teaching

The Direct Method was the first oral based teaching method that gave a lot of importance to pronunciation. It came to surface during the late 1800’s and late 1900’s. The proponents of this method realized the importance of oral speech and particularly everyday speech. This method is an intuitive – imitative approach. In fact, the intuitive- imitative approach, as proposed by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996) is an approach in which second language (L2) learners listen and imitate the rhythms and sounds provided by the teacher or the audiotape used. Following the direct method, the teacher provides L2 learners with a model of native-like speech. By listening and then imitating the modeler, L2 learners improved their pronunciation. Learners were encouraged to use the language (i.e., speak, produce). The teacher was the source of learning and pronunciation

is taught through imitation and repetition. Even though, the direct method put pronunciation on the front, the methodology for teaching pronunciation was not fostered and was considered primitive.

Few years later, the Audiolingual Method was developed in the United States during the 1950's while structuralism dominated language theory. It was referred to as the Oral Approach in Britain and considered the first modern method used in language teaching based on structuralism and behaviorism. The Audiolingual Method is grounded on the structuralist theory. Pronunciation is taught explicitly from the start and learners imitated and repeated after their teachers or the recorded model. Similar to the Direct Method, the focus is on correctness and the practice of the target language. Plus, the teacher is the sage on the stage. Yet, unlike the Direct Method, the teacher makes use of information from phonetics such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart or charts presenting the articulation of sounds and relying on explicit linguistic information. By the mid of the 1960's, the audiolingual method started to lose ground to Chomsky's (1965) transformational grammar and innateness.

Another approach advocating for pronunciation teaching was the Silent Way. It was introduced during the 1970's. As its name, the teacher does not say much. The approach relies on a specific system that the teacher and the learners established. Proponents believed that the techniques used along this method could improve learners' inner criteria for accurate production. Similar to the Audiolingual Method, the Silent Way gave importance to the accurate production of sounds and structures of the target language. Focus was not only on segmental features, it also combined supra-segmental features as the aim is to sharpen learner's inner criteria for accurate production while relying on a sound-color correspondence system. Yet, unlike the Audiolingual Method, learners' attention is on the sound system without having to learn the phonetic alphabet or any explicit linguistic information.

During the same era, the Community Language Learning (CLL) was developed during the late 1970's to teach second and foreign languages. The approach relied on students' interaction and let the student take the lead in the classroom. Similar to the Direct Method, the CLL is imitative. CLL allows the student to initiate pronunciation practice by selecting the item(s) to s/he wants to practice and deciding on the amount of repetition needed. Plus, the teacher is the provider of knowledge and the counselor for the learners. Correct pronunciation holds a lot of attention to the extent of gratifying learners. Yet unlike the Direct Method, the lessons and the tasks are directed by the learners. Celce-Murcia et al., (1996) explained that the difference between the methods is in the content and amount of practice which is learning-centered and controlled by the learner. The pronunciation syllabus was initially student initiated and designed.

2.2 Con-Pronunciation Teaching

The Cognitive Approach took place during the 1960's and criticized the traditional language approaches used before. This approach was influenced by Noam Chomsky (1965)'s transformational grammar. The Cognitive Approach disregarded pronunciation in favor of grammar and vocabulary mainly because native-like pronunciation was unrealistic and could not be reached. Morley (1991) explained that pronunciation classes were "viewed as meaningless non-communicative drill-and-exercise gambits" (p. 485-486). Pronunciation was de-emphasized and focus was entirely on grammar and syntax. Common classroom tasks were deducing grammatical rules and then understanding them in context.

The Grammar Translation Approach was also known as the classical method. This method relied on the translation of texts and especially literary texts. It was developed during the twentieth century, same as the Reading Based Approaches. These methods considered literary language superior to the spoken language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Reading and writing skills were developed and speaking and listening skills were neglected. Unfortunately, pronunciation received no attention and was considered irrelevant. Oral communication was not the primary goal of L2 instruction. The grammar translation approach was later criticized for being based on written rather than oral language use which led to the inability for students to communicate.

3. Current Pronunciation Teaching Approaches

Each method and approach used to teach pronunciation had its focus and its own characteristics. These approaches were mainly categorized under a focus on language use (i.e., speaking) or under a focus on analyzing the language (i.e., learning grammar). Since the 1980's, the view of language teaching has changed leading to the emergence of new approaches and methods. The position of pronunciation as an orphan (Gilbert, 2010) or as the Cinderella of language teaching (Underhill, 2013) is no longer viable. The focus has been directed towards promoting effective instructions and practices based on the principle of intelligibility rather than the principle of nativeness (Levis, 2018a; O'Brien et al., 2018).

The Communicative Language Approach (CLT) came into surface during 1980's when the view of language broadened to incorporate communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) and language functions (Halliday, 1973). It holds the premise that communication is the primary use of language. Morley (1991) explained that the aim of teaching pronunciation has changed from reaching native-like pronunciation to a more realistic aim of developing functional intelligibility, communicability, speech monitoring abilities, speech modification strategies and self-confidence. CLT is currently still used and considered the dominant method. The purpose of these goals is for learners to develop an understandable spoken English that serves the learners' needs and gives a positive image of the learner as a speaker of a foreign language.

Other forms of the CLT were adopted and advocated by different researchers. The Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach to language teaching based on a focus on form and considered to be an extension of the communicative language teaching as it draws on some of its principles. Some of its proponents advocate that TBLT builds teaching and learning around real-life tasks from which knowledge of grammar and features of communicative language use can emerge. TBLT is focused on the concept of tasks that emphasize communication and meaning and is concerned with the process of learning based on tasks. Ellis (2003) defines tasks in terms of; meaning as the task requires learners to produce and understand communicative messages, gaps as learners have to complete either with information or opinion, learners using their own resources to understand and complete the task by relying on their own knowledge, and a communicative outcome as the task needs to have a sort of a communicative outcome.

The Text-Based Instruction (TBI) is an approach that derives from a genre theory of the nature of language and the role that texts play in social contexts. Richards and Rodgers (2014) explain that texts are structured sequences of language, used in specific contexts and in specific ways. These tasks are based on how people communicate in a wide range of social contexts. TBI advocates believe that different text forms are used for different situations and therefore, to master the language learners have to be exposed to different genres. Unlike TBLT, TBI focuses on the product of learning rather than the process involved.

Other approaches like the Content Based Instruction (CBI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) emerged with a focus on content unlike TBLT and TBI that have a focus on form. Both approaches were developed with a focus on content or the subject that learners will acquire using English as a mean of instruction. In fact, the approaches are built around the principle that people learn a second language more effectively when they use it as a means of understanding content rather than an end result. In other words, understanding the language you are taught in content is better than just perceiving it as a result (i.e., production written or oral). Plus, content activates both the cognitive and interactional processes as they are the starting point for second language learning. While CBI was conceptualized in the United States, CLIL was dominant in Europe. Yet, Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argue that within these approaches, pronunciation has not been regarded as a main concern of instruction.

Another approach referred to as the Eclectic Approach has mainly one rule; fitting the method to the learner. In other words, the teacher has a grasp of the various methods and approaches and tries to choose the most appropriate one according to the needs of learners. The learner is at the center of the learning process. These various approaches and methods aim to facilitate the understanding of the target language. For example, if the scope of the exercise is accuracy, the teacher corrects the errors immediately. But, if the purpose of the exercise is fluency, then the teacher corrects the errors later on. Unlike other methods, the teacher tries to develop the four linguistic skills of the learner.

3.1 New Directions

The need for new methods led practitioners to take from other fields. One of the most powerful fields that affected pronunciation teaching is information technology. Its impact on the field of teaching generally and teaching pronunciation specifically continuous to flourish. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) have major effects on learning and teaching. They provide a private, stress - free environment that learners can use whenever they wish and decide what they want to learn with endless forms of resources. Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argument that "CAPT can also provide endless opportunities for repetition and imitation, instantaneous responses, and exposure to a wide range of target language speech; it can also facilitate individualized, self-paced learning" (p.235-236). It promotes autonomous learning and provides access to unlimited input, practice, and learners receive instantaneous feedback through the integration of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). Chun (2019) names two language learning softwares that use ASR, referred to as Pronunciation Power and Rosetta Stone. For example, the Rosetta Stone can display waveforms of both the native speaker's and the learner's utterances. The learner can see the

difference between his waveform and the native speaker's waveform. By practice, the learner can reach make the same waveform as the native speaker.

Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argue that several commercial CAPT materials lack solid pedagogical grounds. Yet, some CAPT resources have been developed technologically based on academic collaboration along with pedagogical and language learning grounds. For example, Textware's Connected Speech focuses on connected speech relying on Australian, American, and British English accents. Another resource is the English Accent Coach, based on a feature referred to as the High Variability Pronunciation Training (HVPT). The program plays different audio versions illustrated by various people whose, naturally, pronunciation vary. Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) enumerate other free resources as Sounds of Speech developed by the University of Iowa and the Web Tutorial developed by the University College London.

Even with the extensive number of CAPT softwares, payable and free websites are still as they are functional and reliable. For example, the Learn English Kids website developed by the British council has a specific section entitled "pronunciation activities". Even social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp can be considered pronunciation learning resources. For example, Twitter accounts such as Oxford Words and Cambridge Words tweet "words of the day" and add a direct link where the followers can find the definition and the pronunciation of the word. With the continuous development of CAPT programs, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) offer an amount of convenience that help learners access the teaching app same as any program. Many apps have been developed to suit learners' need. For example, the American Accent on the Go is an app that uses visual articulatory displays. Henrichsen (2020) explains that it features a cartoon character that shows what happens inside the mouth when pronouncing vowels and consonants using an American accent.

Given the various developments that technology has brought into the field of pronunciation teaching and pedagogy, Chun (2019) states that a perfect CAPT program would combine auditory and visualization features, automatic speech recognition (ASR), and appropriate and accurate feedback. She adds that L2 researchers and teachers should collaborate with computer scientists and engineers to resolve such issues. One can say that technology can assist pronunciation teaching, yet teachers can also resort to other technique forms like psychology and drama.

3.2 *New Techniques*

Apart from information technology, the impact of psychology can be seen in the current trends of pronunciation teaching. These current trends put an emphasis on the affect learning domain. Establishing a non-threatening, balanced classroom is an ideal learning environment. The best receptive learning state can exist when there is a learner- friendly environment and the learner is physically relaxed, emotionally calm, and mentally alert. In order to create such an environment, Celce- Murcia et al., (1960) state that using music (for example working on a song and finishing the words) can reduce stress and put learners in a joyful mood.

Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) is a psychological approach considered to have a potential for language teaching. NLP focuses on the connection between an individual's internal experience (neuro), their language (linguistic) and their behavioral patterns (programming). The NLP approach gives a lot of importance to the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and learners. This link between the teacher and learners is believed to be conducive to success in pronunciation teaching. It is not a mere transmission of information from one another. It is rather a dynamic process in which meaning is constructed through reciprocal feedback and a lot of communication taking place. The communication between the teacher and learners takes place consciously and unconsciously through verbal and non-verbal channels. In fact, teacher's language and behavior affects learners' understanding of the topic, and their beliefs about learning. For example, a teacher can use NLP techniques to identify learners' preferred learning style (visual, auditory or kinesthetic). Once this is known, the teacher can adjust their teaching methods and teaching materials to better suit learners' learning style, such as using visual aids or add more hands-on activities. Moreover, the teacher can affect learners' neuropsychological state. When the teacher can identify the state of learners, change can take place. Different techniques can be used to alter learners' states which later increase learners' motivation and engagement. For example, using soft music at the background when practicing activities in class, employing breathing techniques (i.e., relaxation techniques), and changing instructional routine. Once this state is established, the teacher may "anchor" it; recall this state for the future by having students mark the state in a manner. Another technique that NLP highlights is incorporating multisensory reinforcement to engage learners' awareness on multiple levels. For example, using phoneme cards that have a symbol, a picture and a word containing the sound help teach phonemic alphabet and it is considered a visual reinforcement.

Theater and drama techniques can reduce stress. Celce-Murcia., (1996) emphasize that the dramatic situation fosters communicative competence. Using dramatical techniques can make the learner more expressive and enthusiastic to experiment with sounds and intonation patterns. For instance, the voice modulation technique can be used to help with the control of the articulation, pitch and volume, and can help with good pronunciation of the sounds. Another technique labeled the reframing technique can be used in this context. For example, the learner puts himself in an American or British identity and try to talk by focusing on accent, pitch, and intonation patterns.

4. Conclusion

The teaching of pronunciation underwent different stages and phases that led to the development of different approaches, methods, and techniques. The current pool of approaches that have been tuned in over the years are still being adopted either by a focus on content or a focus on form. The teacher can use the approach that best suits the needs of the students and go from there. These methods and approaches can help teachers today use whatever their learners need as they adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Thus, teachers can overcome whatever difficulties that may arise during the course or even after; a solution can be found. New techniques in information technology are always developing and trying to facilitate language teaching and language learning. Teachers can recur to other techniques as psychological techniques, relying on neurolinguistic programming or even incorporating drama techniques. This plethora of approaches, methods, and techniques is available to every teacher of pronunciation to help him or her suit their pedagogical and teaching needs.

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ChatGPT and EFL/ESL Writing: A Systematic Review of Advantages and Challenges

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has initiated a new era in education with significant potential to revolutionize teaching and learning. ChatGPT has attracted scholars' interest in exploring its beneficial aspects and constraints for enhancing teaching methods and learning experiences. This systematic review aims to investigate the advantages and challenges of ChatGPT for EFL/ESL writing. The data was gathered from three databases, namely Web of Science, Science Direct, and ERIC, between November 2022 and January 2024. A total of 182 publications were gathered using precise keywords, and the 15 most pertinent articles were selected following the PRISMA flowchart. Findings show that ChatGPT can enhance writing efficiency and creativity, improve writing proficiency, and personalize learning experiences. It can also reduce teachers' workload by offering automated evaluation, feedback, and support for revision. The results also show that despite its potential advantages for both instructors and learners, it presents some challenges, such as overreliance, decreased motivation, learning loss, identifying errors at the deep level of the language, offering inconsistent and complex feedback, and issues with academic integrity and originality. The detailed findings and their implications for practice and policy are discussed.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL), EFL writing, ESL writing

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has led to revolutionary transformations in the educational field. It has gradually transformed the presentation, customization, and evaluation of instructional content. One of the most popular advanced language models is ChatGPT, which was developed by OpenAI. It is designed to produce text responses that resemble human language by forecasting the sequence of words. ChatGPT has the ability to comprehend and generate text on a wide range of subjects in different languages and various formats. ChatGPT's capacity to participate in contextually appropriate and logical dialogues, as well as produce information based on the input it gets, makes it an adaptable tool for many fields, including education (Wu et al., 2023). Currently, the integration of ChatGPT in education and academia is a very debatable topic due to its remarkable support across several writing genres such as research papers, essays, stories, and letters (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

In the field of language learning, research has shown that ChatGPT has the potential to improve language learning and teaching. For example, Japoshvili-Ghvinashvili and Suleman (2023) concentrated on developing activities that leverage ChatGPT to actively engage learners in language and content-related assignments. On the other hand, Kostka and Toncelli (2023) and Kohnke et al. (2023) emphasized the relevance of digital competency for learners and teachers, as well as the potential of ChatGPT to assist them in the process of language learning and teaching. However, these research studies stressed the importance of adopting ChatGPT with other learning methods while also being conscious of its limitations and impact on academic integrity and creativity.

2. Research Related to ChatGPT and EFL/ESL Writing

2.1 ChatGPT

OpenAI developed the ChatGPT model, an advanced generative pre-trained transformer, initially launched in late 2022 and subsequently enhanced to GPT-4, which was introduced in March 2023. ChatGPT is a prominent figure in artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) due to its capacity to facilitate high-quality interactions. It leverages Large Language Models (LLMs) that utilize vast datasets to forecast contextual word sequences, hence improving its efficacy across various domains (Dwivedi et al., 2023; J. Zhou et al., 2023). The model's advanced design includes techniques like code pre-training, instruction tuning, and reinforcement learning from human feedback, enhancing its capacity to understand human intentions and display advanced skills such as complex reasoning and creative writing (Wu et al., 2023). It provides significant benefits and opportunities for instructing and acquiring language skills. Halaweh (2023) emphasized the importance of training both educators and students to maximize the benefits of ChatGPT in educational settings. EFL/ESL students and teachers can benefit from the support provided by ChatGPT, which represents a progression towards tailored assistance to enhance writing pedagogical approaches and students' writing skills, which is the ultimate goal of writing instruction.

2.2 EFL/ESL Writing Issues

Researchers have reported that EFL/ESL students often encounter issues in writing due to language barriers. It is a challenging task as it includes many “cognitive and metacognitive activities, for instance, brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting and revising” (Alisha et al., 2019, P. 20). In other words, they encounter difficulties ranging from vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation to expressing and organizing ideas, paragraph coherence, and cohesion, along with the fear of making mistakes (Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021; Bisriyah, 2022; Ahmed, 2019). In Bisriyah's (2022) study, EFL students encounter difficulties at all stages of the essay writing process. The students listed these challenges in the following order, from most to least difficult: planning and gathering ideas, engaging in the initial drafting process, then thoroughly revising, and finally choosing a topic and examining content and structure. Researchers have reported that these difficulties arise from different factors, such as a lack of resources, low English proficiency, and limited writing practice opportunities (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

To address these difficulties, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) emphasized that EFL/ESL learners need substantial support to master writing skills. Therefore, EFL/ESL writing instructors should dedicate additional time to activities such as developing reading skills, brainstorming and generating ideas, using planning strategies, practicing drafting, and incorporating feedback, as EFL/ESL students need more assistance compared to native speakers. Similarly, Ahmed (2019) and Sasmita and Setyowati (2021) suggested that instructors need to provide additional writing sessions and offer positive reinforcement to build students' confidence in their writing skills. Thus, teacher feedback is crucial, as researchers have shown that both EFL/ESL students and instructors perceive it as a fundamental aspect of writing instruction (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Palanisamy & Abdul Aziz, 2021).

Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) pointed out that teacher feedback allows for personalized instruction and takes time and effort, exceeding the time spent on preparing for or conducting classroom sessions. Hyland and Hyland (2019) also emphasized the significance of teacher feedback for creating a personalized learning experience. They suggested that teachers should give clear guidance on grammar and vocabulary and assign writing tasks that are relevant to students' personal experiences. Additionally, Palanisamy and Abdul Aziz (2021) concluded in their systematic review that teachers can significantly assist ESL students by providing guidance in writing tasks through feedback, offering sample essays as models, providing clear task explanations, and using scaffolding techniques. Teacher feedback should direct EFL/ESL writers' attention toward macro- as well as micro-level textual elements such as audience expectations, rhetorical structures, and formal accuracy to enhance the effectiveness of writing tasks (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Consequently, to assist EFL/ESL learners in advancing through the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978) and enhancing their EFL/ESL writing skills, it is crucial to provide personalized feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2012).

2.3 ChatGPT and EFL/ESL Writing

Since the release of ChatGPT, researchers have been reporting on the potential and challenges of utilizing it in education. In the realm of EFL/ESL writing, limited research has been conducted on the application of ChatGPT owing to its recent emergence. ChatGPT's incorporation shows considerable promise for enhancing teaching methodologies and student learning experiences. It can assist students in brainstorming writing ideas, creating outlines, improving vocabulary and grammatical competencies, and learning various writing styles (Tlili et al., 2023). ChatGPT offers interactive language practice for EFL/ESL learners to engage in live interactions, creating

a dynamic learning environment. Shahid et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT outperforms traditional teaching techniques in EFL instructions due to its capacity to offer a dynamic learning environment that surpasses other approaches in terms of engagement as well as efficacy in writing activities. ChatGPT's capability to provide prompt and individualized feedback is a valuable tool in EFL/ESL writing instruction. Moreover, ChatGPT's capacities have been shown to boost students' interest and engagement in writing activities, thereby enhancing their writing skills, which is the main objective of EFL/ESL writing instruction (Ali et al., 2023).

Although the researchers emphasized ChatGPT's promise in EFL/ESL writing, they also identified associated challenges. Researchers have shown that EFL/ESL learners may rely too heavily on ChatGPT, which may impair their creativity and critical thinking skills (Harunasari, 2023; Irzawati et al., 2024). Furthermore, Carlson et al. (2023) observed that ChatGPT-generated feedback may be overly verbose or complex for students, reducing motivation and engagement. As a result, teachers must provide opportunities for students to meet in person to discuss concerns and obtain further assistance. Furthermore, several research papers raise concerns about plagiarism and academic integrity (Eke, 2023; Perkins, 2023). According to Eke (2023), the academic community should transparently clarify the ethical use of ChatGPT rather than outright prohibiting it, as well as update academic policies to address new challenges posed by AI in education, advocating for a balanced approach to leveraging ChatGPT's benefits while upholding academic standards. Carlson et al. (2023) addressed concerns about privacy in the generated feedback, emphasizing the need for teachers to be aware of its potential biases. To this end, the current systematic review aims to explore ChatGPT's advantages and challenges in EFL/ESL writing. Specifically, it aims to answer the following research question:

(1) What are the advantages and challenges of incorporating ChatGPT in teaching and learning EFL/ESL writing?

3. Methodology

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the methods employed to acquire the published articles pertaining to ChatGPT and EFL/ESL writing. This systematic review follows the guidelines provided by the recommended Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) as outlined by Page et al. (2021). To ascertain the literature pertaining to ChatGPT and EFL/ESL writing, three databases were queried to locate primary studies relevant to the subject under examination. In order to ensure the quality and reliability of the publications, we examined well-established databases: ERIC, Science Direct, and Web of Science (WoS). The literature evaluation was conducted in four distinct phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

The development of a systematic literature evaluation on the advantages and challenges of integrating ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing has been segmented into four primary phases. The initial phase involves the identification of pertinent articles, utilizing specified keywords as a search string to conduct the systemic review. The selection of these keywords was based on a careful examination of the primary study question regarding the advantages and challenges of incorporating ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing (see Table 1 for details). In addition, the search technique was developed by employing Boolean search operators to enhance the precision, efficiency of the searches (Booth et al., 2012). The total number of identified articles in this phase was 182 from the three databases.

Table 1. Keywords used as search sting

Database	Keywords related to ChatGPT and EFL/ ESL writing
Web of Science	(TS=(“ChatGPT” OR “GPT” OR “Chatbots” OR “artificial intelligence” OR “AI”)) AND TS=(“Teaching writing” OR “learning writing” OR “ESL writing” OR “EFL writing” OR “L2 writing” OR “Second language writing”)
Science Direct	ChatGPT and learning L2 Writing OR ChatGPT and teaching L2 Writing OR ChatGPT and L2 writing OR ChatGPT and EFL writing
Eric	ChatGPT or chat gpt or chatbot OR artificial intelligence or AI AND ESL writing or EFL writing or learning writing or Teaching Writing

In the second phase, a screening process was conducted to identify and eliminate duplicate publications from the specified databases. As a result, three duplicate publications were eliminated from the initially gathered documents. Furthermore, the 160 documents that failed to match the required criteria were eliminated (see Table 2 for details). These included publications such as articles that did not highlight the use of ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing learning and teaching, dissertations, book reviews, conference papers, and articles that did not address the predetermined keywords. Thus, only the studies that specifically focused on ChatGPT and EFL/ESL writing were chosen for further evaluation.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Article topic	Discuss ChatGPT in ESL/EFL writing learning and teaching	Does not discuss ChatGPT in ESL/EFL writing learning and teaching
Literature type	Journal articles and review articles	Dissertations, Reports , Book review, Conference Papers
Time period	November, 2022 to January, 2024	Articles published outside the time period
Access	Full access	No Full access available

Following the screening process, a total of 19 articles were chosen for the eligibility test. This involved a thorough evaluation of the titles, abstracts, keywords, and main contents to ensure they met the specific criteria outlined in Table 2. During the eligibility stage, four additional documents were excluded due to their failure to meet the research inclusion requirements and their lack of relevance to EFL/ESL writing. Ultimately, a total of 15 relevant publications were deemed eligible for further examination and analysis.

4. Results

Figure 1 illustrates the outcomes of the search and selection process, starting from the total number of articles identified in the database search to the number of studies included in the review, as presented in the PRISMA flow diagram. A total of 182 publications were found in the Web of Science, ERIC, and Science Direct databases. After eliminating redundant articles, the total number of documents was reduced to 179 for screening. Upon examination of the records, it was determined that 160 articles were deemed irrelevant due to their lack of alignment with the focus of this review. Four other publications were excluded due to their close relevance to the examined issue, but they did not fit the requirements for inclusion. Ultimately, the review encompassed a total of 15 articles. These articles were analyzed to address the main inquiry of identifying the advantages and challenges of utilizing ChatGPT for teaching and learning EFL/ESL writing.

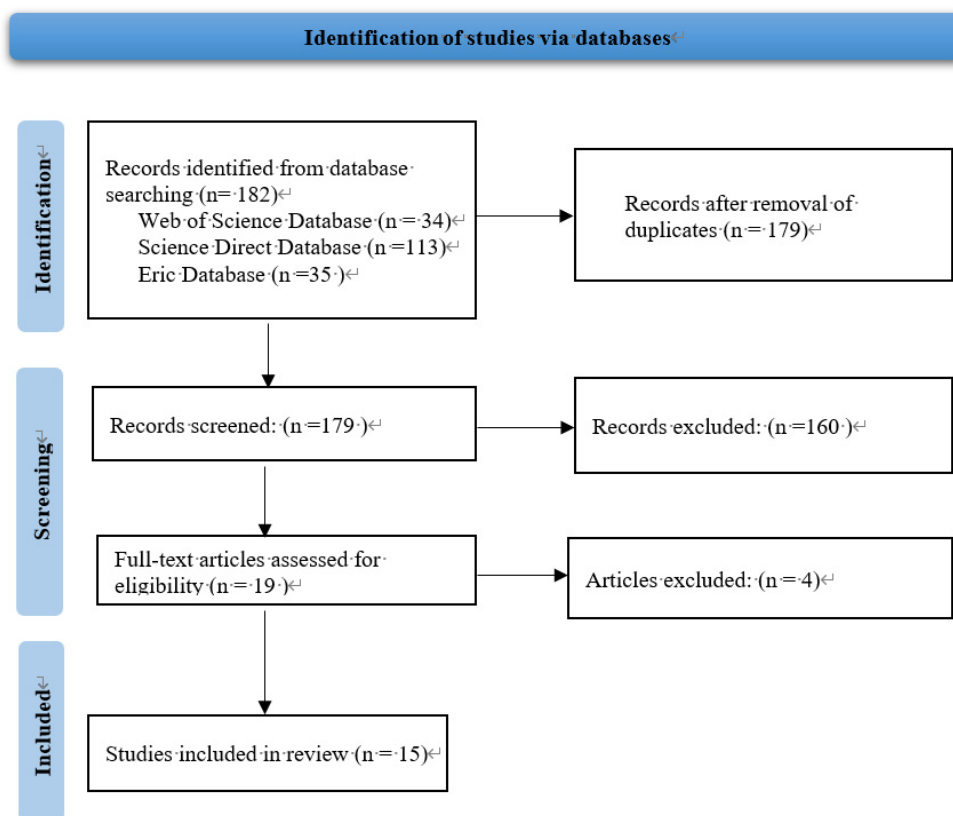


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of article selection

Regarding the advantages, the following table (Table 3) presents the main benefits of using ChatGPT for EFL/ESL writing. It organizes these advantages into themes and emphasizes the key findings from the sources.

Table 3. The advantages of ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing

Theme	Main Findings	Reviewed articles
Enhanced Writing Efficiency and Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faster drafting and editing saves time for students and educators, streamlining the writing process. Effectively summarizes texts. Develops content to support lesson preparation and writing activities. Encourages student creativity by brainstorming ideas, teaching paraphrasing, and producing written texts in various styles. 	Liu et al. (2024) Bonner et al. (2023) Marzuki et al. (2023)
Improved writing proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates well-structured essays and outlines, guiding students on organizational structures, which is crucial for improving writing skills. Facilitates the detection and correction of grammatical errors, thereby improving writing mechanics. Helps in refining sentence structure, vocabulary, and overall coherence, promoting a better understanding of language nuances. Improves the quality of writing by enhancing content, organization, and the ability to identify logical fallacies, leading to better reasoning in writing. 	Liu et al. (2024) Marzuki et al. (2023) Zhang et al. (2023a) Bonner et al., (2023) Algaraady & Mahyoob, (2023) Baskara (2023)
Personalized learning experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived as a "personal tutor" and "learning partner" in writing. Encourages self-regulation and fosters autonomy and confidence in learning. Provides extensive exposure to language learning and writing practice. 	Wei (2023) Zou & Huang, (2023a)
Automated and efficient evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capable of evaluating a large number of essays in a timely and efficient manner, thereby reducing time and introducing a degree of objectivity and consistency that would be challenging to attain solely through human scoring. 	Mizumoto & Eguchi (2023)
Support for feedback and revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides real-time, tailored feedback on students' writing exercises. It effectively identifies surface-level errors, offering targeted feedback to enhance language proficiency and writing skills. The supportive feedback mechanism boosts learners' confidence in their writing abilities and reduces anxiety associated with writing assignments. 	Wei (2023) Guo & Wang (2023) Barrot (2023) Algaraady & Mahyoob, (2023) Zou & Huang, (2023b)

As Table 3 shows, the incorporation of ChatGPT into EFL/ESL writing instruction presents significant advantages, radically altering the EFL/ESL writing learning experience and outcomes. It provides a variety of features that help both learners and educators with the writing process. One of the most significant advantages of using ChatGPT is its ability to improve writing skills and enhance efficiency and creativity. The instructions supplied contribute to noticeable advancements in writing skills. According to Bonner et al. (2023), ChatGPT helps create well-structured essays and creative writing prompts. This feature saves teachers and students time by providing writing tasks tailored to students' levels of proficiency, thereby improving their EFL writing skills. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2023a) pointed out that ChatGPT enhances students' reasoning and EFL writing quality by increasing their comprehension and identification of logical fallacies. Additionally, ChatGPT's interactive and adaptive

features provide a personalized learning experience that can significantly enhance learners' writing skills to construct written texts in English. It provides real-time feedback that is specifically tailored to address individual weaknesses, surpassing the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods. This immediacy and personalization enable learners to quickly recognize and fix their flaws, creating a favorable learning environment that drives continual growth and engagement. According to Guo and Wang (2023), ChatGPT distinguishes itself from conventional Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems by providing customizable and explanatory feedback, allowing students to better grasp and implement the comments.

Table 4 lists the challenges associated with incorporating ChatGPT into EFL/ESL writing. It indicates that ChatGPT has the capacity to impede the writing proficiency of EFL/ESL learners by the potential of promoting excessive dependence, which can ultimately result in decreased motivation to learn writing and hinder critical thinking (Zhang et al., 2023b; Barrot, 2023; Zou & Huang, 2023a).

Table 4. The challenges of ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing

Theme	Main Findings	Reviewed articles
Risk of Over-reliance, Reduced Motivation, and Learning Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relying on ChatGPT to complete writing assignments may hinder the development of independent writing skills. • Might reduce students' motivation to actively participate in the writing process and engage in critical analysis. • Raising the risk of decreased learning and creativity, as well as undermining the primary aims of writing instruction. 	Barrot (2023) Yan (2023) Zhang et al. (2023b) Zou & Huang (2023a)
Inadequate Error Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChatGPT lacks deep error analysis since it struggles to grasp and understand the underlying context of errors. 	Algaraady & Mahyoob (2023) T. Zhou et al. (2023)
Language Barrier in Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChatGPT's feedback might not be entirely pertinent or understandable to non-native speakers. • ChatGPT's feedback might be challenging for students to understand and apply due to issues with language barriers and feedback relevance. 	Baskara (2023) Guo & Wang (2023) T. Zhou et al. (2023) Zhang et al. (2023b)
Inconsistencies in Content Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feedback and content generated by ChatGPT exhibit inconsistencies in quality, which may hinder learners' ability to rely on such tools for steady improvement. 	Guo & Wang (2023) Liu et al. (2024)
Academic Integrity and Originality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in maintaining academic honesty; risks associated with plagiarism; and the originality of student work. 	Yan (2023) Barrot (2023)
Concern Over Educational Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChatGPT may engender disparities by conferring an unjust advantage upon certain students in comparison to those who employ conventional writing methods. 	Yan (2023) Guo & Wang (2023)

Regarding the provided feedback, it has been found that even though ChatGPT provides beneficial feedback, it is not without limitations. Algaraady and Mahyoob (2023) and T. Zhou et al. (2023) have observed that ChatGPT's analysis of writing errors tends to be superficial, focusing mainly on surface-level issues such as grammar and punctuation. The findings of their studies indicate that ChatGPT was unable to recognize errors related to the deep structure of the language. Additionally, ChatGPT possesses the capability to offer content and feedback at different levels of proficiency. However, it may present feedback that proves challenging for EFL/ESL learners to incorporate into their writing (Guo & Wang, 2023; T. Zhou et al., 2023; Baskara, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023b). Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) and Guo and Wang (2023) have expressed concerns regarding the lack of consistency in the quality of the feedback. This inconsistency may hinder the learning process and provide unreliable assistance in writing tasks, where consistent and structured feedback is essential for continuous learning.

Moreover, researchers have raised concerns about academic integrity and the authenticity of student learning. They have emphasized that there should be a requirement for explicit guidelines and ethical considerations to be established for both teachers and students (Yan, 2023; Barrot, 2023). Additionally, they pointed out that students

who have access to ChatGPT might outperform those who still depend on traditional methods of writing, and that creates discrepancies in students' evaluations and raises concerns about educational equity.

5. Discussion

The findings reveal that ChatGPT can support EFL/ESL learners as well as instructors in various aspects and stages of the writing process. Regarding EFL/ESL learners, ChatGPT can assist them in developing ideas, outlining, and refining sentence structure, vocabulary, content, organization, and coherence to enhance their knowledge of the language. It also helps in the editing process, as it has been approved to effectively address surface-level errors. This is related to the findings of Tlili et al. (2023), which highlighted ChatGPT's capabilities in assisting students in brainstorming writing ideas, creating outlines, improving vocabulary and grammatical competencies, and learning various writing styles. The findings also show that ChatGPT is portrayed as a personal tutor and learning partner in EFL/ESL writing, in which it provides personalized learning experiences as well as extensive exposure to writing practice, which eventually motivates self-regulation and fosters autonomy and confidence in EFL/ESL writing learning (Wei, 2023; Zou & Huang, 2023a). This is similar to the findings of Ali et al. (2023), in which ChatGPT has been found to boost students' interest and engagement in EFL writing activities. Thus, learners can benefit from ChatGPT to alleviate EFL/ESL writing challenges, which have been documented to be raised by different factors such as a lack of resources and limited writing practice opportunities (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

Regarding EFL/ESL teachers, the findings indicate that ChatGPT can help them develop content to support lesson preparation, create writing activities, provide prompt feedback, and assess writing tasks. Scholars have emphasized the importance of personalized and prompt feedback in developing writing skills for EFL/ESL learners in that it helps through the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014), Ahmed (2019), and Sasmita and Setyowati (2021) emphasized the necessity for EFL/ESL instructors to provide extra writing sessions, which is a challenging task for most instructors. This difficulty can be mitigated by integrating ChatGPT, which can reduce the workload of writing instructors and serve as a personal tutor to improve EFL/ESL students' writing skills. In short, the results demonstrate that ChatGPT can provide customized and prompt feedback, which is fundamental to improving writing skills as well as boosting learners' confidence (Ali et al., 2023; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

The findings also indicate that ChatGPT is not without challenges. It might hinder EFL/ESL writing development due to learners' heavy dependency on it to complete the writing tasks, which may eventually lead them to lose interest in learning and demotivate them to actively engage in the writing process. This is related to the findings of Harunasari (2023) and Irzawati et al. (2024), in which they reported that EFL/ESL learners may rely too heavily on ChatGPT, which may impair their creativity and critical thinking skills. Moreover, the findings show that EFL/ESL learners' overdependency raises concerns about the academic integrity and originality of their writing. This has been a major concern in academia. Scholars including Eke (2023) and Halaweh (2023) have advocated for educational institutions to establish explicit ethical guidelines and conduct training sessions for instructors as well as learners to optimize the advantages of ChatGPT while maintaining the integrity of ethical standards. Another challenge is related to educational equity, where students using ChatGPT may get better results compared to those relying on conventional writing approaches, leading to disparities in students' assessments.

Regarding challenges related to feedback, ChatGPT has limited ability to detect in-depth error analysis. The results also indicate that EFL/ESL students may struggle to comprehend and implement feedback because of language barriers. Additionally, the findings show that the feedback and content generated by ChatGPT vary in quality, which may hinder learners' ability to rely on such tools for consistent improvement. These findings are in line with Carlson et al. (2023), suggesting that feedback generated by ChatGPT is overly long or difficult for students, resulting in reduced motivation and engagement. Therefore, Carlson et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of instructors not relying exclusively on ChatGPT but utilizing it as a supplementary tool. They also recommended providing students with opportunities to schedule meetings to address challenges and receive further support as necessary.

In short, despite the challenges and limitations, the results indicate that ChatGPT has significant potential for EFL/ESL writing instruction. The findings offer important implications for educators, policymakers, and academics to efficiently use ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing instruction. Educators can optimize writing instruction by integrating ChatGPT into writing activities to improve learning outcomes. This integration also fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages student engagement and autonomy in writing while also catering to individual student needs, hence facilitating a personalized learning experience. Furthermore, in order to maximize the advantages of ChatGPT, policymakers should clearly define and create precise ethical guidelines.

This would enable educators and learners to incorporate ChatGPT while adhering to ethical standards. Finally, academics can benefit from the results' practical significance by developing better knowledge of the relationship between AI technology and EFL/ESL writing instruction. The findings add to the scientific discourse on language learning and educational technology integration.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review aims to explore the advantages and challenges of ChatGPT in the context of EFL/ESL writing. The findings indicate that ChatGPT has tremendous potential for EFL/ESL writing instructions. EFL/ESL learners can benefit from its assistance to improve their writing proficiency, as it is capable of providing tailored assistance based on their needs. It can efficiently provide feedback on a surface level as well as offer automated evaluation and support for revision, which will benefit teachers and reduce their workload. However, even though the feedback provided by ChatGPT has been found beneficial, it failed to recognize deep-level errors and might provide complex feedback that is difficult for EFL/ESL learners to comprehend and implement. The results also found that EFL/ESL learners might overrely on ChatGPT, which might result in demotivation, learning loss, plagiarism, and a violation of academic integrity.

Although ChatGPT has limitations, its significant advantages in the EFL/ESL writing setting for both teachers and students are undeniable. Therefore, it is crucial for academic stakeholders and policymakers to clearly define the ethical use of ChatGPT and establish explicit policies to reduce its challenges, rather than banning it in academia. In order to utilize AI tools such as ChatGPT to their utmost potential and incorporate them into instructional activities, it is imperative that both teachers and learners possess digital literacy and receive appropriate training. Additionally, in order to optimize the capabilities of ChatGPT, it is critical to inform them of its constraints.

Even though this systematic review provides valuable insights into the advantages and challenges of ChatGPT in EFL/ESL writing instruction, it has some limitations. This paper includes only research and review articles that are accessible in three databases. As a result, the amount of examination may differ, thus jeopardizing the generalizability of the current findings. Furthermore, the dynamic nature and rapid advancement of AI technology may influence the generalizability of the results, and the existing literature may not accurately reflect the most recent advances. Hence, it is crucial to take into account these limitations.

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Iconicity in Chinese Sign Language and Filipino Sign Language

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Abstract

Sign language is primarily used as a means of communication by the deaf and hard of hearing. Iconicity is considered as its typical feature. This paper makes a preliminary comparison on lexical items between Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and Filipino Sign Language (FSL) through examining the iconic devices used by the CSL and FSL signs. The study provides some valuable evidence that the iconicity is prevalent in CSL and FSL which always use similar iconic device for the same concept due to shared embodied experience though different iconic devices are occasionally used. These iconic devices include direct (1) presentation; (2) number representation; (3) shape representation; (4) movement representation (5) size representation; (6) part-for-whole representation; (7) metonymic/metaphorical representation. The findings of the research could help to reveal the relationship between language and cognition and make some contributions to the communications among the deaf and hard of hearing in both Chian and the Philippines.

Keywords: Chinese Sign Language, Filipino Sign Language, iconicity, iconic devices

1. Introduction

Sign language is a means of communication primarily used by the deaf and hard of hearing. As a visual symbol system, sign language is mainly expressed through the form of manual articulation in combination with non-manual markers. Each country in general has its own native sign language, such as Filipino Sign Language (FSL), Chinese Sign Language (CSL), and American Sign Language (ASL). Not surprisingly, these sign languages are not universal, that is, they are mutually unintelligible even though they also have many similarities in articulation and non-manual markers.

Factually, sign language has long been ignored by linguists who have only considered sign language as a minor form of gestural communication to high extent similar to pantomime. It is not until William C. Stokoe and his associates who started the seminal work in 1960s that sign language had been established and analyzed as a natural language. The research on sign language over the past sixty-some years has shown that sign language, like spoken language, has an elaborated systems in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Tai, 2005). According to Stokoe (1960) and other theorists, hand shape, hand location, palm orientation, movement and non-manual signals are the basic components of a sign language (Tai, 2005) even though one sign language varies from another in these aspects. For instance, CSL and FSL use different fingers to represent the number “three” although both of them use three fingers (the differences will be analyzed in the following section).

Since the status of sign language has been established, relevant studies have sprung up one after another. But most of the research is concerned with the similarity occurring in sign language and spoken language. This undoubtedly has minimized all the unique features that sign language has, such as simultaneity and iconicity (Capirci et. al. 2022). Moreover, the research is more about sign languages in various countries and regions, such as American Sign Language, French Sign Language, Finnish Sign Language, Taiwan Sign Language, Chinese Sign Language, and even International Sign Language (Frishberg, 1975; Cuxac, 2013; Puupponen, 2019; Tai, 2005; Chan & Wang, 2008; Whynot, 2016). But there are still few comparative studies between two sign languages. So the present research tries to make a comparison between Chinese Sign Language (CFL) and Filipino Sign Language (FSL) to benefit and promote the communication among the deaf and hard of hearing from two countries.

2. Icons and Iconicity

2.1 Concepts

According to Peirce (1894, 1903), there could be three categories of signs—icons, indices and symbols—in light of the connection between the sign and its object. An icon is a kind of sign which is used to represent an object through its qualities. That is, an icon shares these qualities with its object and there is resemblance between an icon and its object. The icons are further divided into the image, the diagram, and the metaphor.

Iconicity refers to the natural connection between language and human experience or concepts. It represents a relationship between language symbols and the external world surrounding us. But it is not an objective relationship existing between an icon and a referent, but instead a relationship connecting our mental models of the icon and referent. According to Taub (2001), the motivations behind these models are partially from our embodied experiences common to all humans and partially from our experience in interactions with specific cultures and communities. He also believed that iconicity is common to all human languages, no matter whether it is a signed language or a spoken language. More importantly, iconicity could invariably occur at each level of linguistic structure. Put it in another word, the iconicity can occur in either morphology, syntax or individual words (Taub, 2001). Taub (2001) has further elaborated that iconicity is dependent on human's ability of associating sensory images with concepts and iconizing these images to identify resemblance between them by means of exploiting the language, all the while the original images' basic structure of the original icons is in completeness. Following this line of argumentation, therefore, the research is to examine the similarities and differences in the way in which the iconic devices are used by CSL and FSL lexicon.

2.2 Iconicity and Sign Language

As the main way for deaf and hard of hearing to communicate, sign language plays an important role in their knowledge acquisition, cognitive development and social development. With the rise of cognitive linguistics in the past 30 years, the study of sign language linguistics has drawn much from it and achieved further development (Li & Wu, 2014). As a visual language, sign language has more iconicity potential than oral expression. Therefore, iconicity is considered to be the most significant feature of sign language (Thompson et al., 2020). Mandel (1997) used to believe that iconicity is the motivation of sign language vocabulary and grammar, which can be divided into two categories: declarative and descriptive. The former means that sign language users use gestures to refer to the object itself, while the latter uses sign language to simulate the shape of the object, which is a virtual description technique.

Iconicity is a phenomenon of mapping where there is similarity and correspondence between language form and content (Wang, 2000). It is mainly reflected in the static sign language system and the dynamic use process. It is the expression of experience and perception at the cognitive level. Iconicity is an important field of linguistic research. The study of iconicity is conducive to promoting people's attention from verbal language to sign language and understanding the relationship between language and cognition and the brain mechanism of language processing (Cao & Li, 2021).

One of the ways to integrate iconicity with sign language linguistics is to enhance the study of sign language. At present, the interest in the study of sign language is mainly manifested in the large amount of attention paid to "signing" (also known as the gesture mode of sign language) (Zhang & Wang, 2021; Shen Yuan 2022). For example, Grote & Linz (2003) has concluded by analyzing the impact of sign language iconicity on semantic conceptualization that only part of the attributes of a sign it refers to can be represented by iconicity, that is, the iconicity between the sign and its meaning is neither complete nor objective, and the understanding of this iconicity is filtered by the perceiver's understanding.

Some studies have also been done on the similarities and differences of sign language iconicity in different countries based on their cultural backgrounds. It has been found that any country using sign language to communicate is inseparable from iconicity words, and there is a certain degree of consistency in the understanding of iconic devices and meaning (Kan & Wang, 2014; Gao & Gu, 2013; Thompson, 2020). For example, Kan and Wang (2014) found that Chinese and American sign languages have the same iconicity devices, including direct expression, number expression, hand shape expression, action expression, size expression, metonymy and metaphor expression. According to their study, sign language can express the target meaning through similar shapes in terms of iconicity and the visual similarity of iconicity in different countries is affected by the existing objective reality. For example, the expression of "bird" in Chinese sign language is very similar to that in American sign language. In Chinese sign language, the hand is placed in front of the mouth to imitate the shape of the bird's mouth, and then the hands imitate the wings of the bird to make a flying shape. The expression of American sign language is similar to it, imitating the mouth shape of "bird".

Undoubtedly, there are some differences in the iconicity of sign language in different countries. For example, the iconicity differences in different parts of speech will be different. Relevant studies have conducted rating analysis by comparing 220 meanings of American sign language, British sign language, English and Spanish, and compared how iconicity between sign language and spoken language spreads in sign language vocabulary and spoken vocabulary (Perlman, 2018). It is found that verbs are more saliently marked in American sign language, signs and English, but not in Spanish; the iconicity of gestures is particularly prominent in American Sign Language and British sign language; adjectives in English and Spanish show stronger iconicity; the iconicity of color words in American Sign Language and British sign language is low. Therefore, iconicity can be used as a model to explain the differences between the languages of different countries, so as to understand the influence of the local culture and the mainstream language of different countries on sign language.

3. Comparisons between FSL and CSL

Based on the sets of iconic devices developed by Taub (2001) and Tai (2005), who respectively take ASL and TSL as the language base, Chan and Wang (2008) proposed that there were seven iconic devices which are used by CSL lexicon. These devices are: (1) direct presentation; (2) number representation; (3) shape representation; (4) movement representation (5) size representation; (6) part-for-whole representation; (7) metonymic/metaphorical representation. Following the above identified set of iconic devices, the following subsections are devoted to make comparisons on the use of these iconic devices in both CSL and FSL.

3.1 Direct Presentation

Direct representation involves naming an object through pointing to it. In this iconic device, the referents are the physical identities themselves. The most obvious examples are in the words of body parts. All (at least majority of) sign languages in the world denote body parts by means of pointing to them. CSL and FSL are no exception and they use the same iconic device. For example, the sign MOUTH in both the Philippines and China are iconized by the index finger pointing to the mouth and simultaneously it turns around the mouth, which involves shape representation to trace out the outline of the mouth. The sign EAR is another example. As shown in the figures 1 and 2, both signers articulate the words EAR by pointing to ear(s) using index finger(s). There is only one difference between the signs: CSL uses one index finger of dominant hand to point to one ear (Figure 1) while FSL uses two index fingers of two hands to point to two ears (Figure 2).



Figure 1. CSL EAR

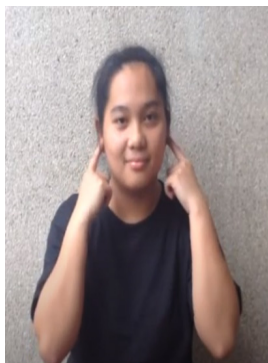


Figure 2. FSL EAR

3.2 Number Representation

Number representation is defined as a means to use the number of fingers to directly indicate the number of referents. This is also described as “number-for-number iconicity” (Taub, 2001). The digital numbers from one to five are represented directly by the numbers of fingers in CSL and FSL. In both CSL and FSL, the ring finger of dominant hand is the icon for the number one and the ring finger and middle finger are used to form the sign TWO. However, there is one difference in the CSL and FSL signs THREE. In the case of CSL, the digital number THREE is traditionally represented by the little finger, the ring finger and the middle finger (Figure 3). However, it is the index finger, the middle finger, and the ring finger which are used in FSL to express the meaning of digital number THREE (Figure 4). The latter way to represent THREE is also used in Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) (Tai, 2005).

3.3 Shape Representation

Shape representation is the means used by the signer in depicting particular shape images of the referents through utilizing certain hand shapes and hand forearms. This may be illustrated by the CSL and FSL signs BIRD (Figure 5 & 6). Both of them use the same iconic images and iconic devices. As shown in Figure 5, the CSL sign BIRD is a compound sign. In signing, the right hand is firstly used to iconize the shape of a bird’s beak (Figure 5a), and then both hands and forearms are used to stand for the shape of a bird’s wings, and simultaneously moves the hands up and down to depict the bird’s flying movement (Figure 5b), which involves movement representation. The same iconicity occurs in the case of Filipino sign BIRD (Figure 6).



Figure 3. CSL THREE



Figure 4. FSL THREE

3.4 Movement Representation

Tai (2005) describes movement representation as a means to depict the referent’s movements through utilizing movement of the hands, forearms and fingers. This iconic device represents iconicity of movement. As noted by Taub (2001), movement iconicity often co-occurs with iconicity of shape-for-shape. The reason for this lies in that “when the articulators themselves are in configuration to depict a referent’s shape, the signer can move it around to stand for the referent’s movement” (Taub, 2001). This has already been illustrated in the second component of signs BIRD in CSL and FSL (Figure 5 & 6).



Figure 5a. CSL BEAK



Figure 5b. CSL FLY

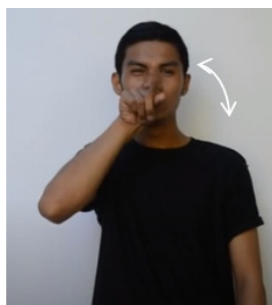


Figure 6a. FSL BEAK



Figure 6b. FSL FLY

3.5 Size Representation

Size representation refers to the signer using the size of articulation to represent the size of the referent (Tai, 2005). It is a case of “size-for-size iconicity” (Taub, 2001). A pair of signs LONG and SHORT in CSL is utilized here to demonstrate this form of iconicity (Figure 7 & 8). In the case of sign LONG (Figure 7), the signer stretches out the index fingers of both hands with them staying close, then the two fingers are moved away along the horizontal axis to the opposite direction to increase the distance between the two fingers, hereby expressing the concept of “long”. On the contrary, in the case of sign SHORT (Figure 8), the signer moves his two index fingers towards each other to visually make short the distance from one hand to another hand. A

corresponding pair of signs for LONG and SHORT in FSL are given here for comparison (Figures 9 & 10). The same iconic device is exploited in the signing of LONG and SHORT. In the case of FSL sign LONG, the signer slowly moves her left hand with a shape of alphabet L in FSL along the arm of dominant hand from front to back, thereby visually lengthening the distance. In this case, the length of arm demonstrates the quality of being long. While in the case of FSL sign SHORT, the signer moves her index finger and middle finger toward each other to shorten the distance to describe something as being short, which is different to the case of CSL sign SHORT where only the index finger is used. As one can see, in both pairs of CSL and FSL signs LONG and SHORT, the visual lengthening of distance is exploited to represent something long, and visually shortening that distance is used to depict something short although the iconicity is motivated from different images.

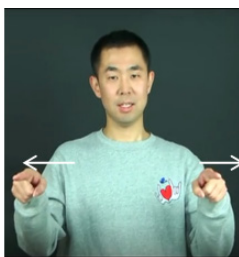


Figure 7. CSL LONG



Figure 8. CSL SHORT

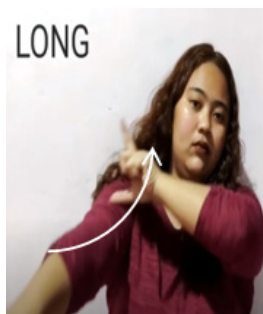


Figure 9. CSL LONG

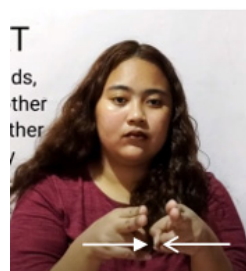


Figure 10. FSL SHORT

3.6 Part-for-Whole Representation

The part-for-whole representation involves the signer representing the referent by using characteristic part of the referent. The CSL and FSL signs CAT (Figures 11 & 12) can illustrate this iconic device. In both signs, the cat's head is iconized and the focus is on the cat's typical feature that it traditionally has long whisker. In the case of CSL CAT, the signer first uses the middle finger, the ring finger and the little finger of both hands to represent the cat's whiskers and places them on her cheeks which are the icons of cat's face, then moves the hands outward across the cheeks, representing the trace of the cat's whiskers. The palms of the hand should face the signer. In the case of FSL sign CAT, all the fingers of both hands are separate from each other with the thumb and index fingers being placed on the cheeks to represent the cat's whiskers, and then the thumb and index fingers are moved outwards across the cheeks while the thumb and index fingers are moving towards each other until the tip of the index finger in each hand touches the tip of the thumb finger.

3.7 Metonymic/Metaphorical Representation

Tai (2005) points out that in spoken language, "abstract concepts can be expressed through metaphor and metonymy." While metonymy involves expressing abstract concepts through association, while metaphor involves expressing abstract ideas by means of metaphorical mapping. One transparent example of metonymy is the sign LOVE. In both CSL and FSL, the signer typically crosses the arms over the chest in an X shape, with closed fists to indicate "love". That is, the crossing of arms resembles the event where two people are hugging each other, representing the affection or love.

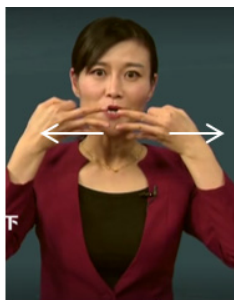


Figure 11. CSL CAT

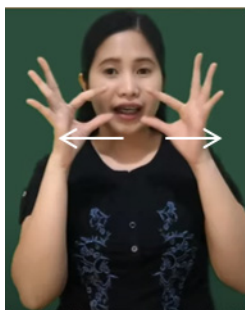


Figure 12. FSL CAT

The example for metaphor is the sign MARRY. In the case of CSL, the signer extends the thumbs of both hands with their tips facing each other, and bend the thumbs twice (Figure 13). The CSL sign uses thumbs to represent the couple and the fists are close to each other to represent the concept "marry" to symbolize the joining of two individuals in marriage and in the future life they rely on each other. Be reminded that "bending twice" stands for the bride and groom bowing to each other during the wedding ceremony. That is, the CSL sign MARRY also involves metonymy besides metaphor. The case is different for FSL sign MARRY where the signer brings the two hands together with palms facing each other and the dominant hand above another hand (Figure 14). That is, the FSL sign MARRY only involves metaphor to denote two individuals who join together in terms of two hands brought together.



Figure 13. CSL MARRY



Figure 14. FSL MARRY

4. Conclusion

The research exemplifies how CSL and FSL use the iconic devices similarly and differently. It is found that CSL and FSL are similar in the use of iconic devices in most cases of signing, as in CSL and FSL signs EAR, but in some cases where different images are used to represent the object or activity, as in CSL and FSL sign CAT. Moreover, there may be only one iconic device used by a sign, as in CSL and FSL sign THREE, or it may utilize two (or more) iconic devices, as in CSL and FSL BIRD. This finding may demonstrate that the lexical similarities between unrelated signed languages may be attributed to the role played by iconicity. However, we have to admit that this is by no means an exhaustive list of iconic devices used by either CSL or FSL and the future work is needed to investigate more iconic devices. Moreover, the present study only makes a comparison between CSL and FSL on a very limited number of lexical items and the future research on large set of lexicons is needed to provide more reliable data. To whatever extent, the research can be another valuable work on the comparison between two sign languages in terms of iconicity and help reveal the relationship between language and cognition. Moreover, it can also make some contributions to the communications among the deaf and hard of hearing in both China and the Philippines.

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The Impact of Foreign Language Anxiety on EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Blended Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) learners toward blended learning and explores the impact of foreign language anxiety on shaping these attitudes. The study sample selected purposively consisted of 118 participants. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a self-reported questionnaire to assess learners' foreign language anxiety and their attitudes toward blended learning. The study yielded the following significant findings: First, the results revealed that EFL learners exhibited positive attitudes toward blended learning. Second, findings indicated that EFL learners involved in blended learning exhibited a moderate level of foreign language anxiety. Third, the study revealed that foreign language anxiety had no significant impact on the following four key constructs of attitudes toward blended learning: flexibility, study management, classroom learning, and online interaction, as well as overall attitudes. However, it was observed that the high-anxiety group exhibited more positive attitudes toward online learning and technology in blended learning compared with the low-anxiety group. These findings have pedagogical implications for educators and practitioners designing and implementing blended learning approaches in EFL classrooms. The study results recommend integrating blended learning in higher education, taking into account high-anxiety learners' preferences of two aspects of blended learning: online learning and the integration of technology.

Keywords: blended learning, EFL learners, foreign language anxiety, attitudes

1. Introduction

Blended learning has emerged as a prominent and highly discussed topic in education, particularly in the post-pandemic era. This instructional approach, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning activities, has gained considerable attention for enhancing learning outcomes and providing flexibility in education (Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Vaughan, 2007). The success and effectiveness of blended learning heavily rely on learners' attitudes toward this method of instruction (Selim, 2007).

In the higher education context of Saudi Arabia, blending face-to-face instruction with online components has become increasingly common, especially after the pandemic. Therefore, investigating Saudi EFL learners' attitudes toward blended learning is essential to understanding their acceptance and engagement with this instructional teaching mode. Moreover, examining learners' foreign language anxiety, which interacts with their experiences and attitudes in a language-learning context, is crucial, and exploring the potential relationship between foreign language anxiety and learners' attitudes toward blended learning is essential for identifying factors influencing learners' acceptance of this type of learning.

Despite the frequent research into learners' foreign language anxiety in traditional face-to-face instruction, there has been no study conducted on examining learners' foreign language anxiety in blended learning. However, few studies have been conducted on the effect of learners' foreign language anxiety on online learning (Pichette, 2009). This study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring learners' attitudes toward blended learning and investigating the effects of foreign language anxiety on these attitudes. The following research questions guide this study:

- (1) What are the attitudes of Saudi EFL students toward blended learning?
- (2) What are the levels of foreign language anxiety experienced by Saudi EFL learners in a blended learning environment?
- (3) Is there a significant difference in the attitudes toward blended learning among Saudi EFL learners with different levels of anxiety?

By investigating these research questions, the researchers aim to enhance our understanding of how EFL learners perceive blended learning and how their foreign language anxiety levels influence their attitudes toward this instructional approach. The findings will provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in Saudi Arabia and beyond, enabling them to create a more effective and supportive learning environment for EFL learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Blended Learning

Blended learning has gained significant recognition and popularity as an educational instructional method during and after the pandemic. It combines face-to-face activities with online components, creating a more effective and flexible learning experience (Bawaneh, 2011; Bonk & Graham, 2012; Brew, 2008). Rovai and Jordan (2004) highlighted the flexibility of blended learning, suggesting that it lies on a continuum between face-to-face and online learning environments. Blended learning is often referred to by various terms such as mediated learning, hybrid instruction, web-assisted instruction, or web-enhanced instruction (Delialioglu & Yildirim, 2008).

Extensive research has explored the benefits of blended learning in higher education. Singh and Reed (2001) identified benefits such as improved learning effectiveness, optimized program development costs and time, and optimized outcomes. Additionally, Smith and Hill (2018) highlighted advantages such as enhanced student outcomes, increased autonomy, self-directed learning, increased flexibility for teachers and students, personalization of learning experiences, opportunities for professional development, cost efficiencies, and increased engagement among all classroom participants.

However, the successful implementation of blended learning depends on the availability of technological tools and learners' acceptance of this instructional approach. Therefore, understanding learners' attitudes toward blended learning is crucial for optimizing its implementation and addressing potential challenges that learners may encounter.

2.2 Learners' Attitudes Toward Blended Learning

Several studies have examined learners' attitudes toward blended learning in higher education, with most revealing positive attitudes toward this instructional approach (Bendania, 2011; Birbal et al., 2018; Hassan, 2015). Birbal et al. (2018) investigated teacher students' attitudes toward various aspects of blended learning, such as learning flexibility, online learning, study management, technology, classroom learning, and online interaction in blended learning. They found a significant positive correlation between online learning, online interaction, and technology, whereas negative correlations were found between online learning, classroom learning, and online environment. They also identified learning flexibility, technology, and classroom learning as essential aspects of blended learning for the participants. Bendania (2011) investigated Saudi learners' and instructors' attitudes toward blended learning. He found that both learners and instructors exhibited positive attitudes, with no significant differences between them, and their attitudes were influenced by factors such as experience, confidence, enjoyment, usefulness, intention to use, and motivation. Similarly, a study by Hassan (2015) on Saudi EFL learners' perceptions of blended learning revealed that learners hold positive attitudes toward implementing this approach in learning English. These studies highlighted the generally positive attitudes of learners toward blended learning, emphasizing the importance of attitude constructs such as technology, flexibility, and learning environment in shaping participants' overall attitudes toward blended learning.

2.3 Language Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological construct characterized by apprehension and generalized fear that is indirectly associated with a particular object or situation (Hilgard et al., 1971, cited in Scovel, 1991). In the context of language learning, language anxiety refers to the complex interplay of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors that individuals experience when learning a foreign language in a classroom setting (Horwitz et al., 1986). Also, it is described as a feeling of stress, nervousness, emotional reaction, and worry linked to second or foreign language learning (MacIntyre, 1999).

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three components of foreign language anxiety. First, communication apprehension refers to shyness characterized by fear and anxiety about communicating with people. Second, test anxiety refers to a form of performance anxiety that originates from a fear of experiencing failure. Students with test anxiety often place high demands on themselves and worry about their performance in evaluative situations. Finally, fear of negative evaluation involves apprehension about being judged by others, leading to avoidance of evaluative situations and judgments from others.

2.4 Learners' Foreign Language Anxiety in Blended and Online Learning

Learners' foreign language anxiety in blended learning and online learning has received limited attention. Most research has focused on anxiety in traditional face-to-face foreign language classes. Currently, only one study conducted by Pichette (2009) has examined learners' foreign language anxiety during online learning. He compared learners' foreign language anxiety between traditional and distance learning environments. The results revealed no differences in anxiety profiles between classroom and distance learners when all levels of learners were combined. Moreover, he compared the effect of language proficiency on learners' foreign language anxiety in online and traditional learning approaches. He found that advanced online students exhibited a lower level of anxiety than beginner students in traditional classes.

2.5 The Impact of Blended and Online Learning on Learners' Foreign Language Anxiety

There are few studies examining the effect of online learning on learners' foreign language anxiety (Jegede & Kirkwood, 1994; Xiangming et al., 2020). A longitudinal study by Xiangming et al. (2020) focused on 158 postgraduate language learners in a technology-assisted learning setting. Over ten weeks, they investigated the changes in language anxiety levels. Their findings revealed that the learners felt less anxious about language learning in the technology-assisted learning setting. Furthermore, they developed positive attitudes toward learning technology, actively participated more, and demonstrated a heightened awareness of their learning progress. The researchers reported that students felt less anxious when interacting directly with the technology tool or with other peers through its use. On the other hand, Jegede and Kirkwood (1994) examined the levels of anxiety of students engaged in distance learning. They found that the students had very high levels of anxiety, with increased anxiety at the end of the course compared to the beginning.

These studies present contrasting findings regarding the relationship between blended learning and learners' language anxiety. Jegede and Kirkwood's (1994) study suggests that technology-assisted learning may increase anxiety levels, while Xiangming et al. (2020) argued it may reduce learners' anxiety. These conflicting findings reflected the need to further investigate the relationship between foreign language anxiety and learners' attitudes toward blended learning.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

The study included a sample of 118 Saudi learners majoring in English from different academic class years. The study participants were selected through purposive sampling, which means they were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. All participants had prior experience with blended learning courses offered by the College of Languages and Translation in the post-pandemic period. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 26. Based on the university placement test, participants' scores ranged between 50 and 93 comprising the following three levels of proficiency: Upper intermediate, intermediate, and lower intermediate. Based on learners' scores on the foreign language anxiety test, they were classified into the following two levels of anxiety: Low anxiety and high anxiety. This classification was based on the median criteria. Many researchers have used these criteria to investigate learners' foreign anxiety (Deweale, 2002). Learners on the anxiety test had a total score range of 45 to 140. Therefore, the median score of the test was calculated to be 100. Participants with scores of 100 and above were classified as the high-anxiety group, while those with scores below 100 were classified as the low-anxiety group.

3.2 Instruments of the Study

Data were collected through a self-reported questionnaire designed to assess EFL learners' attitudes toward blended learning and their levels of foreign language anxiety. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, each targeting a specific construct.

The first section focused on assessing learners' attitudes toward blended learning. Adapted from a previous work by Birbal et al. (2018), it consisted of 37 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items of this instrument have a reliability coefficient ranging between 0.731 and 0.857. The items were categorized into six constructs: learning flexibility, online learning, study management, technology,

classroom learning, and online interaction.

The second section aimed to measure learners' levels of foreign language anxiety. It was adapted from a scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). This section consists of 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It is worth noting that some of the items in this section were negatively worded (items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32). The items were divided into the following three subscales: Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 25. Initially, a normality test was conducted to assess the data distribution obtained from the questionnaire. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that participants' responses were not normally distributed in both scales. Therefore, a nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine any significant difference between the two anxiety groups. Furthermore, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the existence of a correlation between the variables in question. Descriptive statistics were employed to provide an overview of learners' attitudes toward blended learning and their levels of foreign language anxiety. Cronbach's α coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the tests.

3.4 Data Reliably and Validity

Several steps were taken to ensure the collected data's validity and reliability. First, the instruments for assessing attitudes toward blended learning and foreign language classroom anxiety were adapted from established scales used in previous research. This adaptation provided a solid foundation for the reliability and validity of the instruments. Additionally, the data were assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of the internal consistency reliability analysis of the two scales used in this study were satisfactory (see Table 1). Moreover, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of 20 participants to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items.

Table 1. The reliability of the instruments

Scale	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitudes toward blended learning	37	0.828
Foreign language anxiety	33	0.911

4. Results

4.1 Learners' Attitudes Toward Blended Learning

The results revealed that participants held positive attitudes toward blended learning, evidenced by a mean score of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.387 (see Table 2). Additionally, attitudes toward learning flexibility, technology, and classroom learning received the highest mean scores. This implies that these three aspects were considered essential for learners in blended learning.

Attitudes toward technology in blended learning received the highest mean score, indicating the most positive attitude toward its incorporation ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.676$). This suggests that learners strongly endorse technology as a beneficial component of their experience in blended learning. Additionally, learning flexibility, with a mean score of 4.06 ($SD=0.595$), was highly regarded, suggesting that learners value the flexibility blended learning offers regarding pacing, access to resources, and personalized learning experiences. Furthermore, learners demonstrated a highly positive attitude toward blended learning in classroom learning, with a mean score of 4.01 ($SD=0.727$), indicating a positive attitude toward the traditional classroom component within the blended learning approach. This suggests that learners still appreciate face-to-face interaction and engagement. Learners showed moderate positive attitudes toward online interaction and online learning in blended learning, with mean scores of 3.72 and 3.45, respectively.

On the other hand, study management in blended learning received the lowest mean score among the constructs, with a mean score of 3.19 ($SD=0.664$). This suggests a slightly less positive attitude toward managing study tasks and responsibilities within the blended learning context.

Overall, the findings indicate that learners held positive attitudes toward blended learning, particularly toward technology integration, learning flexibility, and traditional classroom learning. However, there were slightly less positive attitudes toward study management in the blended learning setting.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of learners' attitudes toward blended learning

Attitude construct	N	Mean	SD
Learning flexibility	118	4.06	0.595
Online learning	118	3.45	0.404
Study management	118	3.19	0.664
Technology	118	4.15	0.676
Classroom learning	118	4.01	0.727
Online interaction	118	3.72	0.511
Total	118	3.76	0.387

4.2 Learners' Anxiety Levels

This study's findings indicate that learners experienced moderate levels of anxiety in different areas of foreign language learning. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics of students' foreign language levels across different subscales, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, with the total anxiety level also summarized.

Communication apprehension had a mean score of 2.93 (SD=0.577), indicating a moderate level of anxiety related to speaking or communicating in a foreign language. This suggests that students may experience some nervousness or discomfort when engaging in oral communication tasks. Fear of negative evaluation received a mean score of 3.05 (SD=0.747), suggesting a moderate level of anxiety related to concerns about being negatively judged or evaluated by others while using a foreign language. Similarly, test anxiety received a mean score of 3.05 (SD=.644), indicating a moderate level of anxiety related to language testing.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of foreign language anxiety subscales

Subscale	N	Mean	SD
Communication apprehension	118	2.93	0.577
Fear of negative evaluation	118	3.05	0.747
Test anxiety	118	3.05	0.644
Total	118	3.01	0.557

A more detailed analysis of the individual items in the foreign language anxiety scale reveals specific situations that contribute to higher or lower levels of anxiety among the participants (see Table 4). Items with high levels of anxiety were numbers 10, 33, 9, 15, and 30, with mean scores ranging between 3.37 and 3.75. Several items were identified as sources of high anxiety among the participants. Item 10, with a mean score of 3.75, revealed that participants worried about the potential consequences of failing their foreign language class. Similarly, item 33, scoring a mean of 3.56, indicated that participants experience nervousness when their language teacher poses questions they have not prepared for in advance. Item 9 (mean = 3.43) highlighted that participants tend to panic when required to speak spontaneously without prior preparation. Additionally, item 15 (mean = 3.42) indicated that participants become upset when they fail to comprehend the corrections provided by their teacher. Finally, item 30 (mean = 3.37) suggested that participants feel overwhelmed by the perceived complexity of learning the rules necessary for speaking a foreign language.

Conversely, certain items garnered lower levels of anxiety among the participants, with mean scores approaching 1. Item 2 (mean = 2.72) demonstrated that participants do not excessively worry about making mistakes in their language class. Item 8 (mean = 2.58) revealed that participants generally feel at ease during tests in their language class. Item 11 (mean = 2.53) indicated that participants struggle to understand why some individuals become highly upset over foreign language classes. Item 28 (mean = 2.65) highlighted that participants feel confident and relaxed on their way to language class. Finally, item 18 (mean = 2.65) revealed that participants feel a sense of confidence when speaking in their foreign language class.

These findings suggest that participants experience heightened anxiety when confronted with potential failure, unprepared speaking situations, challenges in understanding corrections, and the perceived complexity of language learning. On the other hand, participants exhibit lower levels of anxiety when making mistakes, taking tests, empathizing with the concerns of others, and feeling self-assured and at ease while attending language class.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of foreign language anxiety scale items

#	Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	118	1	5	3.40	1.163
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	118	1	5	2.72	1.307
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	118	1	5	3.10	1.150
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	118	1	5	3.27	1.181
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	118	1	5	2.14	1.015
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	118	1	5	3.05	1.100
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	118	1	5	3.16	1.198
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	118	1	5	2.58	0.810
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	118	1	5	3.43	1.223
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	118	1	5	3.75	1.147
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	118	1	5	2.53	1.076
12	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	118	1	5	3.33	1.155
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	118	1	5	2.61	1.199
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	118	1	5	2.69	1.264
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	118	1	5	3.42	1.089
16	16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	118	1	5	3.15	1.252
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	118	1	5	2.69	1.258
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	118	1	5	2.65	1.081
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	118	1	5	2.82	1.252
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	118	1	5	3.30	1.296
21	21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	118	1	5	2.82	1.325
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	118	1	5	2.88	1.141
23	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	118	1	5	3.22	1.206
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	118	1	5	3.16	1.254
25	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	118	1	5	3.08	1.144
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	118	1	5	2.65	1.150

27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	118	1	5	2.84	1.154
28	When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	118	1	5	2.65	0.999
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	118	1	5	3.23	1.187
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	118	1	5	3.37	1.084
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	118	1	5	2.64	1.362
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	118	1	5	2.86	1.096
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	118	1	5	3.56	1.151

In summary, the descriptive statistics reveal that students experience moderate levels of anxiety in various aspects of foreign language learning, such as communicating, fear of negative evaluation, and test-related anxiety. The analysis of individual items further illustrates specific situations that contribute to higher or lower levels of anxiety among the participants.

4.3 The Impact of Language Anxiety on Learners' Attitudes

The impact of foreign language anxiety on learners' attitudes toward blended learning was examined using statistical analysis. The results revealed several noteworthy findings. First, the two anxiety groups had no significant differences in the overall attitudes toward blended learning (see Table 5). This suggests that learners' general perceptions of blended learning were not significantly influenced by their foreign language anxiety. Moreover, data showed no statistically significant differences in attitudes toward learning flexibility, study management, classroom learning, and online interaction in blended learning.

However, significant differences were observed in online learning and technology variables. The p-value for online learning was less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward online learning between the high-anxiety and low-anxiety groups. Similarly, the technology variable's p-value was .015, indicating a significant difference in attitudes toward technology use in blended learning.

Table 5. The Mann-Whitney U test of learners' attitudes across the anxiety groups

Attitude construct	High anxiety			Low anxiety			Mann-Whitney test		
	N	M	Sum	N	M	Sum	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig
	Rank		of ranks	Rank		of ranks			
Learning flexibility	60	63.49	3809.50	58	55.37	3211.50	1500.500	-1.301	.193
Online learning	60	70.26	4215.50	58	48.37	2805.50	1094.500	-3.498	<.001
Study management	60	64.88	3892.50	58	53.94	3128.50	1417.500	-1.744	.081
Technology	60	66.94	4016.50	58	51.80	3004.50	1293.500	-2.423	.015
Classroom learning	60	58.85	3531.00	58	60.17	3490.00	1701.000	-.211	.833
Online interaction	60	55.78	3347.00	58	63.34	3674.00	1517.000	-1.204	.229
Total	60	64.32	3859.00	58	54.52	3162.00	1451.000	-1.556	.120

These findings suggest that while learners' overall attitudes toward blended learning were not significantly influenced by their level of foreign language anxiety, there were specific aspects of blended learning, such as online learning and technology use, that were influenced by anxiety levels.

Furthermore, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed an interesting association between different dimensions of attitudes toward blended learning and foreign language anxiety. The results, as shown in Table 6, showed that there was a positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety with online learning and study management. This implies that learners with higher levels of anxiety had more positive attitudes toward online learning and study management. However, attitudes toward learning flexibility, technology, classroom learning, and online interaction did not correlate significantly with foreign language anxiety. This suggests that learners' anxiety levels had minimal influence on their attitudes in these aspects of blended learning.

Table 6. The Pearson correlation between the attitudes constructs and foreign language subscales

Construct		Fear of negative evaluation	Communication apprehension	Test anxiety
Learning flexibility	Pearson correlation	0.076	0.058	0.069
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.416	0.533	0.458
Online learning	Pearson correlation	.318**	.277**	0.261**
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.001	0.002	0.004
Study management	Pearson correlation	.265**	0.183*	0.201*
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.004	0.047	0.029
Technology	Pearson correlation	0.046	0.060	-0.044
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.622	0.520	0.634
Classroom learning	Pearson correlation	0.006	0.056	0.148
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.945	0.548	0.111
Online interaction	Pearson correlation	-0.074	-0.081	-0.036
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.424	0.381	0.701

5. Discussion

This study revealed several significant findings that contribute to the existing literature on the effect of foreign language anxiety on learners' attitudes toward e-learning, particularly blended learning. First, EFL learners exhibited positive attitudes toward the following six key constructs of attitudes toward blended learning: learning flexibility, online learning, study management, technology, classroom learning, and online interaction. This finding aligns with previous research by Birbal et al. (2018), Bendania (2011), and Hassan (2015), which also reported positive attitudes among EFL learners toward blended learning. The study's positive attitudes observed among EFL learners highlight their receptiveness and acceptance of the blended learning approach. Furthermore, the study found that learning flexibility, technology, and classroom learning were considered the most essential aspects of blended learning for learners. This finding suggests that learners valued the flexibility that allowed them to customize their learning process, the integration of technology that enriched their language learning experience, and the continued significance of face-to-face interactions in the classroom. This finding is consistent with the findings of Birbal et al. (2018), further supporting the significance of these aspects in the context of blended learning. Second, foreign language anxiety was prevalent among EFL learners, with participants reporting a moderate level of anxiety in terms of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. This finding confirms the previous finding of Horwitz et al. (1986), who reported the prevalence of anxiety among EFL learners at a moderate level. This finding suggests that while anxiety was present, it did not reach severe levels that significantly hindered the learners' language learning progress. Third, the study found no significant differences in the overall attitudes toward blended learning between the high and low-anxiety groups. Also, the study results reported no significant differences in specific attitudes toward learning flexibility, study management, classroom learning, and online interaction in blended learning. This finding indicates that language anxiety does not substantially affect learners' perceptions and acceptance of blended learning. However, an interesting observation was made regarding the specific attitudes toward online learning and technology between the high-anxiety and low-anxiety groups. It was noted that the high-anxiety

group displayed more positive attitudes toward online learning and technology compared to the low-anxiety group. This finding indicates that despite experiencing higher levels of anxiety, these learners still recognized the benefits and value of online learning and technology in their language learning. Finally, there was a strong positive correlation between foreign language anxiety with attitudes toward online learning and study management in blended learning. This finding suggests that students with high levels of anxiety had more positive attitudes toward online learning and management in blended learning compared to low anxiety students.

These findings have important pedagogical implications for educators and practitioners for implementing effective blended learning environments. First, the study emphasized fostering positive attitudes toward blended learning by highlighting the benefits of blended learning, such as increased flexibility and personalized learning. Second, the study highlighted the significant role of language anxiety in shaping learners' attitudes toward technology and online learning in blended learning. Educators should consider integrating technology and online learning components into blended learning environments with caution. They should consider the influence of language anxiety to ensure learners with higher anxiety levels are adequately supported and their concerns addressed, particularly regarding online learning and technology integration. Finally, educators must consider learners' preferences when designing blended learning environments. Some learners with high anxiety levels may find online learning and technology integration more appealing and less anxiety-inducing. By addressing these implications, educators can create more effective and supportive blended learning environments.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

This study's results provide insights into EFL learners' attitudes toward blended learning in higher education and shed light on the relationship between attitudes toward blended learning and foreign language anxiety. The findings revealed that learners displayed favorable attitudes toward blended learning while exhibiting moderate levels of anxiety, which did not exert a significant impact on their overall attitudes toward blended learning. Nonetheless, notable differences in attitudes toward online learning and technology were observed between high-anxiety and low-anxiety groups. This indicates a need for further investigation into the interplay between anxiety and specific components of blended learning.

However, this study has certain limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the data collection relied on a self-reported questionnaire, which may have been subject to potential biases. Future researchers could consider employing additional methods, such as interviews or classroom observations, to triangulate the findings. Moreover, the study focused primarily on foreign language anxiety influencing attitudes toward blended learning. Future researchers could consider a broader range of individual variables, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and proficiency, for a more comprehensive analysis. Incorporating a broader range of variables will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences and facilitate the development of practical pedagogical approaches in blended learning environments.

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Incorporating Korean Culture in English Language Teaching for Intercultural Communication: Adopting CCA Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of integrating Korean culture into the ELT curriculum adopting a critical cultural awareness approach on students' cultural understanding. Furthermore, the study extends its research to examine the extent to which the local cultural understanding in English acquired from the course contributes to enhancing learners' intercultural communication in global contexts. This nine-month longitudinal study employed a qualitative data approach derived from a mixed-method study involving pre- and post-survey questionnaires from college EFL learners and in-depth qualitative interviews. Overall, the findings have shown that the integration of local culture into the ELT curriculum helped students: (i) to enrich their understanding of local culture and history; (ii) to examine cultural values with critical perspectives; and (iii) to feel empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication. The analysis also points out that students' self-/national identity was enhanced, and their English communication skills in global contexts were promoted. Some important implications of this study are discussed for teachers who consider teaching local culture by connecting critical cultural awareness approach in foreign language curricula.

Keywords: local culture, English language teaching, intercultural communication, critical cultural awareness

1. Introduction

In the realm of foreign language education, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of incorporating local culture into the curriculum, particularly with a focus on fostering intercultural communication. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected through globalization, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries has emerged as a critical skill. Intercultural communicative competence, which encompasses the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in both one's own and other cultures, has become a central aspect of foreign language education (Byram, 1997). Byram and Zarate (1997) identified key dimensions of intercultural competence, including knowledge of self and others, skills to interact, critical cultural awareness, relativizing self, and valuing others, for effective intercultural communication. Heightened critical cultural awareness is essential for lessening misunderstandings when communicating within international and cross-cultural contexts.

However, traditional approaches to foreign language education have often prioritized the teaching of the target culture while neglecting the significance of local cultural content (Kramsch, 2013). In response, educators and scholars (Khan, 2014, 2016; Prastiwi, 2013; Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011; Wutun, Arafah, & Yassi, 2018) have emphasized the value of integrating local culture into foreign language education to enrich the learning experience and equip students with the skills necessary for successful intercultural communication. The previous research focusing on incorporating local culture into English language education revealed the benefits of integrating local culture into English language curricula. The local content integration serves to contextualize language learning and make it more relevant to students' lives, which motivates learners to learn English. By connecting language acquisition to familiar cultural contexts, students also had a chance to develop a deeper appreciation for the richness of the local culture, reinforcing national and regional identities.

In Korea, with the globalization of English, English education has incorporated not only American and British cultures, but also various cultures including local culture. Culture education in English classes has aimed at helping effective intercultural communication with people from different cultures. However, while studies on the impact of Korean culture in English education have primarily focused on primary and secondary education, very few studies have explored its impact on English language learning within higher education settings (Kim & Sim, 2016). In addition, there is neither known study examining the impact of integrating Korean culture into foreign language classrooms utilizing critical cultural awareness (henceafter, CCA) approach for Korean students. Moreover, no known study has extended research to explore students' intercultural communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds in global contexts after they have completed the course. Therefore, this study aims to conduct in-depth research to examine the impact of teaching local culture utilizing CCA approach in a foreign language classroom impacts on Korean EFL learners' cultural understanding. Furthermore, it seeks to conduct the longitudinal research to explore its impact on Korean learners' intercultural communication skills in global contexts. It is important not only to consider what to teach by integrating materials of local culture, but also how to teach, focusing on developing critical cultural awareness. This research adopts critical perspectives in teaching local culture in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Integrating Local Culture in English Language Teaching

Contrary to the prevailing notion that learning a foreign language is always associated with the target culture, some studies suggested that learning a foreign language can serve as a means to understand local culture. Culturally responsive teaching has emerged as an essential approach to enhance student engagement and motivation (Vavrus, 2008). It incorporates students' cultures into instruction, values the cultural identities of students and strives to raise academic achievement. It adopts inclusive and welcoming classroom environments and makes learning more culturally relevant and effective for the students.

Research conducted in Indonesia underscores the positive impact of integrating students' culture into English language instruction. Prastiwi (2013) investigated the development of students' EFL skills and local cultural knowledge using Indonesian folktales in translation in primary schools located in Solo, Indonesia. In Indonesia, the government advocates for the inclusion of local cultural knowledge across various educational sectors, including foreign language education. Through the EFL teaching practices using Indonesian folktales, students could not only enhance their language skills, but also develop a sense of local cultural knowledge and identity. This approach allowed them to embrace the diversity of Indonesian culture, promoting the formation of national identity. As Prastiwi (2013) asserted, "Systematic exposure to Indonesian culture creates the possibility of cultural internalization by the students." (p.512).

Similarly, Wutun et al.'s (2018) study demonstrated the positive impacts of integrating local culture into English language learning in Indonesia. Their research revealed that incorporating local culture could aid the learners to focus on new language forms in speaking and facilitate them to learn English more easily. Local culture could serve as a cognitive tool, helping learners recall their existing knowledge and reducing cognitive load. In addition, integrating local culture allowed learners to personalize their learning experience by discussing themselves, their experiences, and their environment and encouraged them to engage in English learning. Khan (2016) also investigated the benefits of integrating Arabic culture into a foreign language classroom. The study found that teachers and students expressed positive attitudes toward integrating Arabic culture into the learning of the English language learning. Integrating local culture could facilitate the learning of both local cultural knowledge and a foreign language.

However, some challenges came up in the integration of local culture into foreign language education, as demonstrated by Shin, et al.'s (2011) study. They explored internationally distributed English learning materials used across several Asian countries including Korea, focusing on the presentation of culture in the textbooks. The study found that the cultural context predominantly featured cultures from English-speaking countries categorized within Kachru's (1985) inner circle. Learning materials play a crucial role in motivating students, and many of the materials examined in this study were not found culturally responsive and did not reflect learners' daily experiences. The findings highlight the need for textbook writers to consider integrating not only the target culture but also local culture within textbooks. The study asserted that this integration is seen as essential to assist learners in developing intercultural competencies.

The research examining the integration of local culture into English language instruction underscores how such an approach can significantly enhance cultural understanding and communication skills. Integrating students' local culture into language learning not only boosts students' ability to acquire and use the new language, but also deepens their appreciation and in-depth understanding of their own culture. Such culturally responsive teaching practices, therefore, serve dual purposes: they enhance linguistic skills while simultaneously enriching students' cultural insight, making them more competent and empathetic communicators in a diverse global landscape.

2.2 Developing Critical Cultural Awareness in Teaching Local Culture

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined, as noted by Kramersch (2013). In the realm of foreign language education, the significance of teaching culture can't be overemphasized. Byram (1997) further elaborated on this point, asserting that foreign language acquisition is enhanced by fostering CCA. It is defined as "the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products within one's own culture as well as those of others." (p.53) By developing CCA, learners not only gain insight into diverse cultures but also acquire a heightened awareness and the ability to critique their own cultures. The consideration of students' local culture is an essential component of the process toward CCA. This aspect of self-reflection and critical cultural exploration is one of the central purposes of English language teaching, promoting not just linguistic proficiency, but also intercultural competence in global contexts.

Moreover, CCA which is the deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding can empower learners to engage with real-world issues, exercise critical thinking skills, and raise the level of intellectual stimulation, enabling them to participate in local and global communities (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). In other words, for learners to interact with individuals of other cultures in global contexts, they need to reflect on their beliefs about their native culture as well as the target culture through active inquiry regarding the products, practices, and perspectives in foreign language classrooms. Teachers can incorporate critical thinking skills into the curriculum by providing opportunities for learners to practice skills in analysis, interpretation, and communication (ibid, 2015). Developing CCA requires identifying and reflecting upon preconceived ideas, judgments, and stereotypes and engaging with thoughtful evaluation of perspectives related to cultures. In addition, creating real or simulated opportunities for interactions with people from other cultural backgrounds will be helpful for students not only to improve communication with others but also to clarify their own ideological perspectives (Byram, 1997).

Additionally, critically examining cultural representations to discern authenticity is a significant aspect of developing critical cultural awareness when teaching cultures. Bishop (2003) defines cultural authenticity as "the success with which a writer is able to reflect the cultural perspectives of the people about whom he or she is writing, and make readers from inside the group believe that the writer knows what's going on" (p.29). This concept involves two dimensions. The first one is the extent to which the work reflects the cultural perspective of the people whose lives are reflected in the work. The second one is related to the accuracy of authentic details and taken-for-granted information possessed by members of a cultural group. Critical analysis of written works can unveil some sense of cultural authenticity. Despite internal cultural variations, cultural authenticity has to do with whether or not a book reflects the cultural values and facts that members of a culture as a whole consider worthy of acceptance (Mo & Shen, 2003). Thus, engaging in critical analysis of written works can provide valuable insights into cultural authenticity.

Therefore, when teaching local culture, it is important to adopt critical perspectives and to encourage students to develop CCA approach. By fostering CCA, learners not only gain understanding of various cultures but also develop a heightened ability to critically examine their own cultures (Byram, 1997). This emphasis on self-reflection and cultural exploration is one of the central purposes of English language education, enhancing not just linguistic proficiency, but also intercultural competence in global contexts. However, this section outlines research approach to data collection and analysis in this study. Since this study focuses mainly on investigating the impact of the English language class inserting local culture on participants' critical cultural evaluation in their own culture and on increasing English communication skills in global situation as a result of the course, it is essential to examine students' various critical perspectives and elicit their inner thought about their self/national identity, and effectiveness for English communication skills. For this reason, before- and- after survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were chosen as the main research instrument in this study.

3. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative, mixed method research design for nine-month period: a before- and after-course survey questionnaire, two in-depth semi-structured interviews, and students' emails were collected.

Literature review section has shown that there has been a few empirical research on the impact of incorporating Korean culture in English language teaching for intercultural communication. Furthermore, there has been no research on the impact or outcomes of understanding local culture knowledge in global context. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of incorporating local culture in English language class on students' critical cultural perspectives, their identities, and communication skills in global context by investigating a Korean culture and English class.

The main research question of this study is 'What are the impacts of integrating Korean culture in English language class adopting CCA on students' better understanding of their own culture and cultural value with critical perspective. This is divided into three sub-questions according to the stages of research.

(1) Korean EFL learners' critical cultural awareness: what impact did the course on the participants' critical evaluation in one's own culture?

(2) Enhancing Korean EFL learners' self/ national identity (after completion of the course when they are in global context): Did participants experience of (re)discovering their self/ national identity in global context as a result of the course?

(3) Promoting communication skills in global context (after completion of the course when they are in global context): did the course contribute to enhancing English communication skills in global context?

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 39 university students who enrolled in 'Korean culture and English' course offered by English department at a university. Of the 39 participating students, 31 participants were majored in English language, while the major of another 8 participants varied such as Theology, Japanese language, and Social welfare. The table 1 provides specific details of the research sampling.

Table 1. Background information of interview participants

Participants	Grade	Major	Gender	English proficiency
S1	4 th	English Language	Female	Intermediate
S2	3 th	English Language	Male	Intermediate
S3	4 th	English Language	Male	Advanced
S4	3 rd	Theology	Female	Beginner
S5	3 nd	English Language	Female	Intermediate
S6	4 th	English Language	Male	intermediate
S7	4 th	Japanese	Female	Intermediate
S8	3 rd	Social Welfare	Male	Advanced
S9	3 rd	Japanese	Female	Intermediate

Note. The participants' English proficiency was self-reported by themselves in the pre-course questionnaire.

This study adopted a mixed sampling approach according to the interview stage: (i) a 'homogeneous sampling' was used for the questionnaire survey; (ii) 'convenience sampling' for the first interview session according to participants' availability and accessibility; and (iii) three out of nine students were invited to the last stage of interview session on purpose.

Dörnyei (2007, p.127) stated that homogeneous sampling is "selecting participants from a particular subgroup who share some important experience relevant to our study" and people who have participated in a certain program can be an example of this sampling. This enables the researchers to gain common patterns of responses and information about a particular group with similar characteristics (Dörnyei, 2007, Patton 2002).

With regard to a purposeful sampling, Patton (2002) explained that purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of *information-rich cases* (my emphasis) for the most effective use of limited resources. In this sense, the three students in the 2nd stage of interview were selected purposely in the hope that they would be able to provide a richer picture of the impact of the knowledge learned from the course by providing their living, hands-on experience in global context.

3.2 Interviews

The main aim of the two semi-structured in-depth interviews was concerned with responding to given research questions: (i) to what extent does the 'Korean Culture & English' class impact on students' cultural understanding; and (ii) to what extent does the knowledge obtained from the course contribute to increase learners' communication skills in global context? The participant students were interviewed in two stages: nine students participated in the first interview and three out of the interviewees in the second interview session. At the first interview, students were asked to respond to a set of questions about their background about English, the course, and pedagogical issues such as general critical cultural awareness of Korean culture and English communication skills. However, in the second interview session, three students took part in the interview through online and were asked to the impact of the local culture knowledge gained from the course in global context.

Like survey questionnaires, the interview questions were further developed, modified, and adapted according to the purpose of the study based on Kim and Sim (2016). This study extended its research by conducting additional interviews (2nd interview) with three participants who had been involved in the global context. It means that this study not only helps explore the improvement of students' critical cultural awareness through the class with, but also provides further insights into real-life experiences within a global context. The table 2 shows the research procedures.

Table 2. Research samples and procedures

Stage	Research method	Number of participants	Sampling	Time
1	Pre-and-post questionnaire survey	39	Homogeneous	Before-and after the course
2	1 st interview	9	Convenience	After final exam
3	2 nd interview	3	Purposeful	3 months after completion of the course

Nine interviewees were invited to the 1st interview after the final exam. The primary aim of the interview is to discern the impact of the course on students' cultural awareness, as well as to understand the significance of local cultural knowledge in the global context and how it prompts students' communication skills. The 2nd interview was followed by three months after the completion of the course when three of the interview participants had firsthand experiences in the global context: student 2 went to New Zealand for language course, student 6 went to Australia for working holiday, and student 5 was a homestay host for American students coming to Korea to attend an international camp.

The prime goal of the interview is to elicit the inner thoughts or cognitive processes that "cannot directly observe; however, it does not mean that observational data are more desirable, valid, or meaningful". (Patton, 2002, p. 340-341). However, in-depth interview data offers insights into individuals' perspectives on certain experiences or matters. In particular, the 2nd interview focused more on "participants' narrative reconstructions of aspects of their lives and experiences" (Duff, 2008, p. 133). All interviews were fully recorded and transcribed, and participants' anonymity was secured.

3.3 Data Analysis

The researchers meticulously scrutinized the students' interview data by systematically identifying recurring themes that emerged through inductive analysis. This method involved the development of patterns, themes, and categories, a process. Patton (2002, p. 453) categorizes it as content analysis, defining it as “the examination of text for recurring words or themes”. Following content analysis, the data underwent coding, involving three sequential steps: pre-coding, open-coding, and coding, which entailed breaking down recurring themes into more granular elements (Sim, 2011). The researchers double checked each other and comment on their data analysis in order to enhance the coder reliability of the findings.

3.4 Context

This course was offered by English department at a university as an optional module for all major students, aiming to help students to (i) develop critical cultural awareness of Korean culture; and (ii) enhance English communication skills to express their own culture. The course covered the broad topics of South Korean history, geography, economy, and entertainment, providing valuable insights from the standpoint of the coursebook author.

Gong and Holliday (2013, cited in Kim & Sim, 2016) stressed the importance of incorporating content that is relevant to learners' lives and interests. This facilitates the cultivation of intercultural communication skills, enabling students to communicate effectively about their own culture in English in the global context. Accordingly, the 'Korean Culture and English' course fosters a deeper comprehension of the 'self,' as addressed by Byram (2008). To achieve the aims of the course, the following teaching methods were used.

3.4.1 Teaching Local Culture Utilizing CCA Approach

There are steps in the process toward CCA (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). In this study, the first step begins when students could reflect on their preconceived ideas and prejudices regarding their own culture. Next, students discussed and critically examined strengths and weaknesses associated with values and perspectives of Korean culture connected with real-world issues. They could also point out accurate and inaccurate description of Korean culture portrayed in the textbook as cultural insiders. Lastly, even though this course did not offer all students the opportunity to communicate with people from different backgrounds in the classroom for all students, some of the students were able to interact with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds in global contexts after completing the course.

3.4.2 English Communication Skills through Local Culture

As a main classroom activity, students were offered an opportunity to engage in experiential learning through fieldwork, wherein they want to visit one of the locales in Korea. This fieldwork offered to acquire authentic and genuine knowledge regarding Korean culture, allowing them to engage with the subject matter in an experiential way beyond the confines of traditional lectures and textbooks. Garcia (2011) suggested that employing local-culture-related vocabulary and terminology can not only enhance the understanding of local cultural knowledge, but also improve students' language skills. In this sense, vocabulary quiz show was conducted to facilitate the use of Korean cultural terminology that was familiar with students, group discussion related to current issues in Korea. Through the learning, students were able to do various activities including 'how to make a kimch or how to play yut (a traditional board game played in Korea, especially during Korean New Year).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Impact of Learning Local Culture on Students' Cultural Understanding

Based on the analysis of survey and interview data, the learners' perspectives were classified into three themes. The themes reflect how local culture can influence learners' cultural understanding for preparing intercultural communication. The themes are presented and discussed as follows:

4.1.1 Rediscovering Korean Culture and History

Integrating local culture in English language teaching by utilizing CCA approach had a positive impact on broadening students' knowledge about native history and culture. The survey result showed that regarding how much knowledge students gained about Korean history and culture from the course, 66.6% (26 students) indicated that the course was very helpful (10 students) or somewhat helpful (16 students) in acquiring knowledge. Thirteen students opted for neutral (10 students) or not really (3 students), and no one chose not at all. Incorporating local cultural values into the curriculum could serve as a way to enrich learners' understanding of their own cultural background and national identity. It creates the opportunity to internalize one's own culture and promote the formation of national identity (Prastiwi, 2013). In this study, learners' interviews revealed that

participation in this course facilitated a more profound understanding of Korean history for students. Students were able to delve into the origins and development of Korean culture, rediscovering the roots and gaining a deeper insight into Korean history and culture.

“So, when it came to culture, Korean culture, I used to think of things like history, hanbok (traditional clothing), and food, and that was about it. But now, taking this course has made me realize that our culture encompasses not only these aspects but also our values, beliefs, religion, and overall consciousness... Through this course, I've found myself gaining a deeper understanding of history along the way.” (S8)

One student above acknowledged that prior to taking the class, his perception of Korean culture was limited to elements such as history, traditional clothing, and culinary traditions. Through this course, his understanding of culture expanded to encompass values, thoughts, religion, and so forth. The use of local culture texts can be a way to stimulate students' motivation since contents of learning are the part of students' life. By doing so, the students feel motivated in English class which brings a positive impact in learning English (Royani, 2013).

In addition, exposure to local culture creates the opportunity to internalize their own culture and promote the formation of national identity (Prastiwi, 2013). The learners had the opportunity to re-evaluate often overlooked, yet valuable facets of Korean culture. The process of expanding and deepening their comprehension of Korean history emerged as a means to instill confidence in their cultural and historical heritage.

“This course has been an opportunity for me to rediscover aspects of Korean culture that I might have overlooked before. Particularly, as I researched places to introduce Korea, I realized that there were things I had missed or now known about. This class has been an opportunity for me to grow with a global perspective and in English and developed interest and pride in Korean culture.”(S3)

The field trip experiences had also an impact on students, providing them with eye-opening moments as they rediscovered the exquisite beauty of ancient palaces. As can be seen in the interview, the experiences provided students a chance to appreciate the delicacy of ancient palaces and the practicality of the floor heating system. The focus on local culture and visits to specific research sites not only deepened students' understanding, but also bolstered their confidence in their cultural identity (Sudartini, 2012).

“Through field research during the course, I've come to realize how beautiful our heritage is and how well-structured it is. When I visited the palace, I noticed how intricately each tile was laid out, and even to a foreigner's eyes, it would appear remarkably sophisticated and beautiful. As a native, I had seen it so much that I didn't appreciate its beauty before.” (S6)

“This class has made me deeply grateful for my own culture and history. I realized that there's so much more to dishes like kimchi than just their recipes—they're products of our rich history. Learning how to explain our culture in English was incredibly fulfilling.”(S1)

Students appreciated how Kimchi has been developed with specific procedures, and how the nation has swiftly overcome economic crises. Researching and studying local culture provided them with an opportunity to reassess the value of their cultural heritage, ultimately fostering a stronger sense of confidence in their own cultural identity. Respecting and having confidence in one's own culture could be a means to empower students to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. One of the students expressed that a sense of pride in her own culture and explaining Korean culture and the life she has lived in English can facilitate better communication with people from different cultures, allowing for a better mutual understanding. The student stressed the significance not only of understanding other cultures, but also of explaining one's own culture in English for better communication between people. Confidence in local culture and being able to explain one's own culture in English plays a crucial role to build intercultural communication (Wutun et al., 2018).

4.1.2 Developing Critical Perspectives

Adopting CCA approach in teaching local culture had a positive impact on developing students' critical perspectives. The survey findings revealed that regarding the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills throughout the course, 74.3% of the respondents (29 participants) reported that overall, the course was beneficial in fostering their critical perspectives. Specifically, 15 students found it as very helpful and 14 considered it as somewhat helpful. Ten students expressed a more neutral stance by selecting neutral, and no one chose not really. The positive impact of the CCA approach on enhancing students' critical thinking skills was further underscored by the data from individual interviews. The interview data offer insights into how the course facilitated deeper understanding of their culture through a critical lens.

When students read works about local culture written by foreigners, they can critique the portrayal of the cultural descriptions in the textbook. During the interview, students critiqued the portrayal of Korean cultures in the textbook from the perspectives of cultural insiders, pointing out accurate and inaccurate depictions of Korean culture. Students expressed:

“It (the textbook) said that Koreans often smile to hide embarrassment or to soften the blow before delivering bad news. This is something that might not be readily understood unless you're deeply familiar with Korean culture. Foreigners might simply take a smile at face value, but the author seemed to grasp the deeper nuances.” (S3)

“Koreans value their group identity, like the book says. When we meet new people, it's common to ask things like 'Are you married?' or 'How old are you?' These questions help us connect and build better relationships. Reading that part made me think the author, even if not fully detailed, knows about people's feelings here in Korea.” (S4)

Despite not being Korean, the author had a profound understanding of Korean culture. According to one of the interviewees above, the author interpreted the significance of Koreans' smiles in various contexts, noting that laughter in Korea is often used to conceal shame or to lighten the atmosphere before delivering unfavorable news. Furthermore, the author pointed out that Koreans place a significant value on group identity and inquire about marital status and age as a means to foster solidarity and develop relationships. Students also emphasized that one can accurately understand and describe Korean culture through experiences and research even if he/she is from a different cultural background. The author's writing is able to reflect the cultural perspectives of Korean people, and make Korean students believe that the writer knows what's going on, which has to do with the success of “cultural authenticity” (Bishop, 2003, p.29).

On the other hand, depictions from the perspective of cultural outsiders could produce inaccurate portrayals of Korean culture. Even though writers combine research and experiences for writing about Korean culture, it might not have been enough to prepare for representing cultural experiences that were outside his own (Bishop, 2003). Writers who attempt to do so might feel difficulties and the risks when trying (ibid, 2003). For instance, the author said that cultural norms in Korea may not involve offering tea or coffee to guests after a meal. Regarding such descriptions, students pointed out that such encounters vary among Koreans, and the author might be generalizing cultural values based on limited experiences.

“I think because the author is writing from a foreigner's perspective, he may have described only what he's personally experienced, which could be as somewhat narrow. For example, in the part about invitations at home, where it mentions that in Korea, hosts do not serve tea or coffee after a meal and sends guests back. I felt a bit disappointed because I believe people differ, and it's not typically like that.” (S9)

Students who become more aware of cultural nuances through CCA will become better prepared to engage in appropriate and effective intercultural communication and relationships (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Students stated that through this class, they could become empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication. One student stressed:

“I think in this globalized context, it's important to open our hearts to differences rather than setting boundaries. Well, now that I'm aware of my biases, I think I can converse with people by understanding and accepting differences more maturely. If I didn't realize them, those unconscious biases could subtly affect conversations, even though it might be a small talk.” (S1)

Through the course, students could reflect their personal prejudices and realize that cultures could not be labelled as right or wrong. Recognizing her preconceived prejudices is essential for being open-minded to people from different cultures and promoting a more inclusive conversation in global contexts. Through thoughtful reflection and evaluation of perspectives related to cultures, students could clarify their own preconceived ideas and stereotypes, which is a way to develop critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

This course also provided learners the opportunity to critically examine Korean cultural values by connecting to real-world issues. Foreign language acquisition is enhanced by CCA, which is an ability to evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures (Byram, 1997). Examining students' native culture with critical perspectives is a deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding, which is a way to develop CCA. One student said:

“I think our country might be more helpful in cooperating with others. Because in our country, there is an atmosphere of adjusting to the other person rather than oneself. In that sense, I think cooperation might work better... But it seems that superiors don't really like it when subordinates present their opinions. They seem to prefer just going along without much resistance. While this might lead to harmony, it also gives the impression of lacking in one's own assertion.” (S7)

As can be seen in the interview data above, the student highlighted strengths and weaknesses associated with the collectivism prevalent among Korean people. According to her, fostering a collaborative environment might lead to more effective cooperation, however, following along too much the supervisor's viewpoint might impede the advancement of one's individuality and personal growth. From students' perspectives and experiences, collectivism can pose obstacles on young generation's growth in global context.

In addition to the issue of collectivism, students also critiqued authoritarian tendencies and values highly regarded in Korean society. A student pointed out that authoritarian values might lead to the development of an undesirable trait, commonly referred to as 'kwon-dae' behavior. This term is often used to describe individuals who, due to their seniority or perceived superiority, may engage in patronizing actions, rigidly adhere to traditional norms, and resist embracing new ideas or perspectives.

“In other countries, the idea of respecting seniors isn't as strict as it is in South Korea. Even if you're just a year older, there's a big emphasis on showing respect. When people join society, those who are older sometimes tend to act too bossy. I feel like those behaviors and attitudes might be unnecessary” (S3).

As can be seen in the interview data, students could reflect upon their own culture, especially regarding the issues of collectivism and authoritarianism, with critical perspectives and feel more connected to the material and real-world issues. Students who are given the opportunity to explore CCA in the language classroom feel more connected to learning materials by connecting to real-world issues (Kramsch, 2004), and reflect on their own culture and discover personal stereotypes and prejudices with critical perspectives (Houghton, 2013).

4.2 The Impact of Learning Local Culture on Intercultural Communication in Global Context

The results from the in-depth qualitative interviews are discussed with a thick-and-rich description of impact of local cultural knowledge on learners' self/ national identity and English communication skills.

4.2.1 Local Culture and Self Identity

Many authors asserted that integrating local culture in ELT curriculum can be a way of enhancing learners' cultural background and self-identity, ultimately fostering a sense of national identity. (Holliday, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Sudartini, 2012; Shrestha, 2016). This is because content of local culture contains the local history, economy, beliefs, values, and culture that enable learners to identify their identities. Therefore, “the sole emphasis on target language and culture makes foreign language learning incomplete and handicapped” (Shrestha, 2016, p.56).

Holliday (2013, p. 36) stated that a foreign language can be integrated with speakers' own cultures as they stamp their cultural identities on it. In this view, local culture requires appropriate implementation without the risk of loss of learners' local identities. Moreover, through rigorous inquiry and thoughtful reasoning of local culture adopting CCA approach, students can gain more profound understanding of their own culture (Byram, 1997). According to Ushioda (2011), self and identity is people's sense of who they are, how they relate to the social world and what they want to become in the future. One student commented:

“When I was in New Zealand, I realized that many foreign people only know Korea as a former colony of Japan. I explained as far as I know. Specifically, how Korea is now on the path to becoming an economic powerhouse.” (S2)

“It's incredibly prideful to talk about what we are! However, I need to revisit my 'Korean culture and English' class assignments again to explain in more detail.” (S2)

As can be seen in the interview data, the embedment of local culture utilizing CCA approach can promote students' pride of their own culture that triggers them to widely promote to global societies. Furthermore, the student (S2) went on to say:

“There's a world map at school that labels sea in the east as the 'Japanese sea,' so I asked them to change it into East see, and they apologized, saying they did it as shown in Google map”. (S2)

The interview data is tied up with Shrestha (2016) in that she addressed that the fundamental purpose of incorporating local culture in ELT is to not only represent indigenous knowledge, but also strengthen national identity. Likewise, two students said:

“I’ve become more confident in discussing our culture and history and came to discover my identity as a Korean. If I hadn’t taken this course, I would not have been frustrated while explaining about Korean culture, particularly Korean history [...]” (S6)

“My cultural identity is a crucial indicator of my beliefs and of who I am. The identity discovered as a Korean while talking with foreign friends enables me to explore and understand my cultural heritage. There’s a saying that the most Korean thing is the most global. How can one claim to be a global citizen without knowing their own country?” (S5)

The interview data is supported by Pierce (1995). He (p. 18) argued that when L2 learners convey their views in the target language, they are “not only exchanging linguistic information with target language partners, but they are constantly constructing and reconstructing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world”. As can be seen, students can discover who they are through interaction with interlocutor by weaving of diverse cultural threads in global context. This point may be consistent with some recent research (Baum, 2014). In other words, one’s identity is not a singular entity but rather a dynamic process involving interaction with others. Through a ‘dialogic circuit,’ individuals establish their identity by engaging in relationships with others (Woodward, 1997). Accordingly, rich in intercultural communication in ELT that has emphasized ‘self’ would help “engage students in the process of constructing self-identity and cultural negotiation” (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

4.2.2 Local Culture and Intercultural Communication Skills

Most of English teachers might have thought about how they encourage language learners to become more communicatively competent and how they facilitate interaction between L2 learners and international speakers. Every time L2 learners speak, they are “not only exchanging information with their interlocutors” (ibid, 1997, p. 410). Learning local culture itself can serve as benchmark for students engaging in intercultural communication since content familiarity assists students to facilitate their communication by using their own culture (Jenkins, 1999, cited in Margana, 2009). In particular, the deep process of cultural understanding such as reflecting and examining local cultural values and perspectives in developing CCA is a vital component of the process of learning local culture (Negent & Catalano, 2015). The two interview data from a student below shows well how content familiarity and critical examination of her own culture can lead active participation, interest, and motivation during communication.

“Before taking this course, American students came to our school for a camp, and we had some kind of party. At that time, I hadn’t taken this course yet. I didn’t have many topics to talk about. I didn’t know what to say...so I just sat on the terrace...” (S5)

“We played yut during class, and I actually played it with my host family (two American students), and they found it very enjoyable. I was able to tell how to play it very actively because it is Korean traditional play. We had a chance to talk about the differences about food habit between two countries. I shared about Korean food we learned in class. I felt a sense of pride in myself in that I was able to share my knowledge in English.” (S5)

This is supported by Barker (2012). He stated that if local culture is used for communication, an understanding of culture may uncover cultural differences, potentially helping negotiation process between two foreign speakers.

“Actually, I hadn’t thought about Korean culture and history in English before taking this class. My English is quite weak and I haven’t got good knowledge about Korean culture and history. However, when my New Zealand friends visited Korea and we went to Gyeongbokgung (This is called “Gyeongbokgung Palace.” The Palace is a renowned historical site located in Seoul, South Korea). I was able to explain about the Palace. I had an experience to visit Gyeongbokgung Palace with my group members during field trip in ‘Korean Culture & English’ class, so I was able to explain well when my European friends visited. Even though I didn’t know the details, I could communicate with my foreign friends”.

The interview data above reveals that the knowledge of Korean culture is one of the significant factors to influence the success for communication with international speakers. It is evident that communication skills are improved with the experience of learners’ lives since local culture is the culture where the learners live. Another interview data shows this well:

“My two American friends ate Korean food well, used chopsticks more than forks. I was able to explain to them what I had learned in class by exemplifying such as using chopsticks, eating tangpyeongchae (a court cuisine characterized by its colorful appearance and for the harmonious taste created by its ingredients), and bulgogi. I wasn't very familiar with what tangpyeongchae is before the class.” (S5)

The relationship between implementing local culture in ELT class and improvement of students' intercultural communication skill is highly interrelated. The figure 1 demonstrates the connections between the knowledge of local culture and improvement of intercultural communication skills.

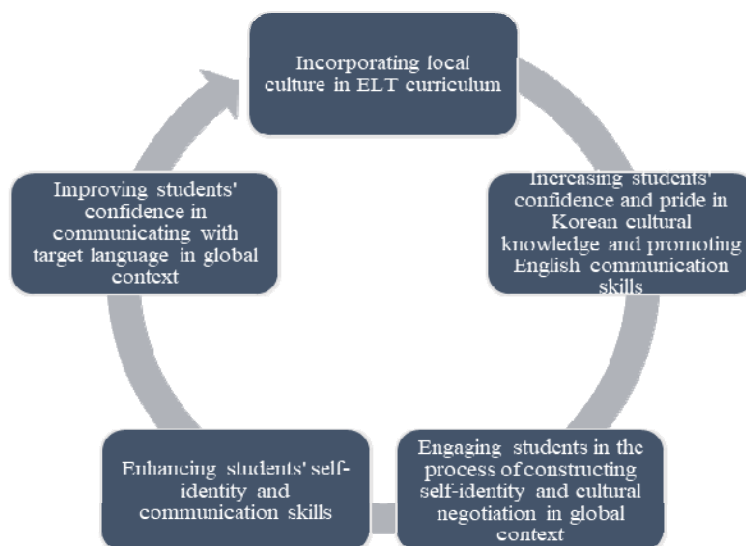


Figure 1. The interrelation between local culture and intercultural communication competence

5. Conclusion

Integrating local culture into foreign language education can enrich learning experiences and equip students with the skills necessary for intercultural communication (Prastiwi, 2013). It can be a way of enhancing self-identity, ultimately fostering a sense of national identity (Holliday, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Sudartini, 2012; Shrestha, 2016). When teaching local culture in English, developing CCA is beneficial in that students being more aware of cultural nuances through CCA will become better prepared to engage in appropriate and effective intercultural relationships in global contexts (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Examining students' local culture with critical perspectives can provide students to experience a deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding (Byram, 1997).

In this study, students demonstrated that incorporating local cultural values into English language curriculum could serve as a way to enrich learners' understanding of their own cultural background and national identity. What is more, it had a positive impact on their English language learning. The opportunities to evaluate perspectives, practices, and products regarding one's own culture could also provide students chances to critique the portrayal of Korean cultures in the textbook and to critically examine Korean cultural values by connecting to real-world issues. Through the course, students could become empowered and better prepared to engage in intercultural communication.

Specifically, learning local culture using the CCA method allowed students to improve their intercultural communication in global context in three aspects: i) encouraging a deeper comprehension of one's cultural awareness; (ii) supporting the discovery of personal or national identity; and (iii) improving English communication skills. With regard to the discovery of self, learners were able to be involved in the process of constructing the identity toward their home culture (Lee, 2002; Milville et al., 2000, cited in Lin, 2009). Consequently, learners could reduce language learning conflicts coming from the incompatibility in identities between home and target cultures (Berry et al., 1987; Domanico et al., 1994, cited in *ibid*). Moreover, as Dalton-Puffer (2011, p. 196) stressed “well-embedded in the matrix culture of the L1 and possess a high degree

of familiarity for the learners”, familiar content allowed students to gain confidence in discussing their own culture in English, leading to improvement of English communication skills.

When foreign language learning is enhanced by critical cultural awareness, students are equipped with the skills in global communities because of the deeper level of cultural understanding (Byram, 1997). Therefore, it is highly recommended that language teachers consider connecting critical cultural awareness to themes that are already being explored in the regular foreign language curricula (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Teachers need to create an open environment of reflecting on their own culture and discovering personal stereotypes and prejudice in the foreign language classroom (Houghton, 2013). Reflecting and critiquing perspectives and values in one’s own culture can be a way to encourage students to adopt a more open-minded approach for better communication with people from different cultures.

Moreover, when teaching local culture in English, it is vital to select materials that portray Korean culture accurately and authentically, as this significantly motivates students (Shin et al., 2011). Often, these materials might not be culturally responsive or reflective of students’ daily experiences. When learning materials are written and portrayed by native speakers of English, teachers can encourage students to critique these depictions of local culture by examining accurate and/or inaccurate descriptions in the written works. Additionally, for practical use, there is a need to convince teachers of the benefits of integrating local culture in foreign language classrooms. Demonstrating the benefits of incorporating local culture by adopting CCA approach in a foreign language curriculum and providing the necessary support for teachers are crucial to encourage them to teach autonomously and effectively.

While this study highlights the impact of integrating Korean culture into English language teaching utilizing CCA approach, it’s essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study. Providing opportunities for intercultural communication with people from different culture in English language classrooms would be beneficial, especially for students who lack opportunities to engage in intercultural communication in global contexts. If it is not feasible with contextual constraints, synchronous communication with students in other countries can serve as a beneficial alternative, allowing practice in English and facilitating intercultural experiences. Further research needs to explore the effectiveness of adopting CCA approach in teaching Korean culture in English language classrooms, incorporating structured opportunities for intercultural communication. The research will examine how intercultural communication impacts on language proficiency and intercultural understanding among learners, providing deeper insights into the benefits of such educational practices.

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