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ACTIONS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

On the omnipresence of language in and from actions

The psychomotor dimension of language, of linguistic activity, and of language education, which constitutes ERLA's 2025 focus, can be argued to be **the least noticed of all the four dimensions**. This is so because throughout our daily existence and everyday routines we act without reflecting upon all the actions we happen to undertake – which, in turn, may be viewed as a loss of a potentially huge benefit. It might be greatly beneficial to our language skills (as well as our general education and overall development) if we sticked to the practice associated with very young age of parents and teachers naming out loud the actions being performed so that the child listening to these verbal descriptions can better internalize them and link with their respective wording. I daresay that if this practice was not dropped (frequently as early as at the end of pre-school education), it would affect not only our educational performance but – comparably – our professional achievements just as well.

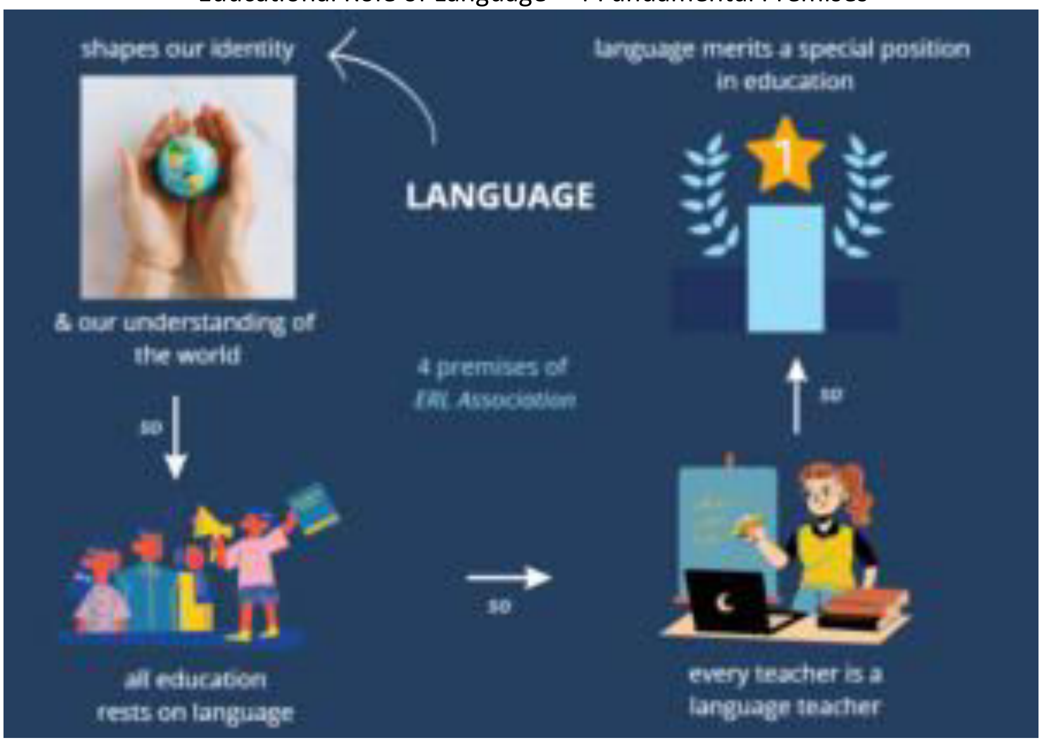
At the same time **our actions directly follow from our affect and our beliefs**. In other words, the way we feel and the views we hold essentially determine the things we do – which is why of the reasons why in ERLA's trajectory and in its Cycle 3 *actions* come as third (to be followed by *thinking* in 2026). We return to similar questions as those posed with regard to the affective and axiological domains, addressing actions on the level of connections (i.e. what the nature of the link between language and actions is), systems (i.e. how that link operates with regard to personal identities, educational systems, societies, and cultures), domains (i.e. how actions affect, beliefs, and thinking, thus turning the relationships round), and disciplines (i.e. how various disciplines contribute to our understanding of the language-and-actions link). This has prompted ERLA to address respective questions such as *What is first – language or actions?*, *How do language and actions affect each other?* / *What characterises the language of particular people, societies, educational systems* / *How much and in what way is language employed across different school subjects?* / *What specific linguistic actions are valued, practised, and reflected upon?* / *Which theories address the psychomotor dimension of language learning/teaching and use? What language learning/teaching methods are most conducive to overall development?* Although not all these questions are actually addressed in this very volume, they had underlaid this year's ERL conference and form the context of the text contained herein.

The joint consideration of language and actions proves highly prolific. Our speech acts, as it has traditionally been referred to, have a far-reaching educational, social and cultural impact, the effects of sometimes are often not strictly attributed to language per se, which can be seen as an error of attribution or a major omission. **Using language by word of mouth for the sake of educating, sharing or informing can**, for instance, **be understood in terms of verbal treats**, whereby one person can provide another person with a bit of pleasure, engaging knowledge, quenching curiosity, or mental entertainment – with the effect being directly comparable to physical or metaphorical treats such as a delicious meal or an invitation to a party, respectively. And again, in line with the observations from the first paragraph above, verbal treats frequently pass unnoticed and, as a result, they are not appreciated despite their potential influence of their recipients. Quite obviously, they are not named in this way, but also just taken for granted as part of normal human interaction entailing information and knowledge exchange. Yet, they do remain as valuable and effective actions, for the performance of which we need (spoken or written) language.

In analogy to the first issues of 2023 and 2024, addressing how language relates to affect and beliefs, respectively, this volume also comprises two parts – Part 1. ***Actions in language*** and Part 2. ***Language in actions***. Although it is often hard to distinguish between these two forms of inclusiveness, each paper does emphasise one of them and thanks to the complementary character of the two forms, the entire volume – hopefully – has a nicely comprehensive character. Following the tradition of *Educational Role of Language Journal*, the papers are accompanied by a set of reviews and reports of publications and events that relate in a smaller or bigger degree to the eponymous link. Both there "R's" as well as the main papers included in the volume demonstrate a clearly practical edge and relate to language-and-actions being put to use on different educational levels and various situational and local contexts.

Michał Daszkiewicz

Educational Role of Language – 4 Fundamental Premises



Noun disease in Norwegian – lost in translation
How to express actions in the two written varieties of Norwegian – teaching vs. practice

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Abstract
This paper is a contribution to the 2025 topic of the Educational Role of Language Association (ERLA 2025a): Language in Actions – Actions in Language belonging to the ERL research scope Language(-)Activity that is addressed in project cycle 2 (ERLA 2025b). The linguistic "action" in focus in this paper is related to the (over)use of nouns derived from verbs and adjectives, and other heavy noun constructions in the two varieties of Norwegian written language, Bokmål and Nynorsk. This has been dubbed "noun disease" in textbooks and general language advice and is considered "bad" language, first of all in Nynorsk texts, but in principle also in Bokmål. The Language Council of Norway as the standardising authority is expected to be especially aware of the differences between the two written standards, and possibly also to be a linguistic role model. In this paper, we have investigated a few parallel texts, i.e. the same text in Bokmål and Nynorsk, published by the Language Council of Norway. While this is a small-scale project, it is strikingly clear that the Language Council has not made any attempt to alter the Nynorsk translations in the investigated texts other than following the standard for Nynorsk orthography and lexicon. The Nynorsk versions are word-for-word translations that follow the Bokmål version slavishly. There is no deviation from Bokmål in syntax or formulation that one would expect in idiomatic Nynorsk texts. While one may say that this is "good" from the perspective of guaranteeing the comparability of the texts as legal documents, one may say that this is "bad" from the aspect of respecting Nynorsk as a language different from Bokmål, with its own history and style, and respecting Nynorsk users' right to read idiomatic and authentic Nynorsk texts instead of mediocre translations of Bokmål texts. From a teaching and learning perspective, the use of administrative texts is limited. One may learn differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk in orthography and choice of words (lexicon), but the Nynorsk translations investigated here are not what one traditionally would consider authentic or "good" Nynorsk as described in textbooks about Nynorsk.

Keywords: *good vs. bad language, language didactics, linguistic comparability, noun disease, noun expressions, Nynorsk as an alternative written language, Nynorsk style, substantivisation, translation, verbal actions, verbal expressions, verbal nouns*

Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the 2025 topic of the Educational Role of Language Association (ERLA 2025a): *Language in Actions – Actions in Language* belonging to the ERL research scope *Language(-)Activity* that is addressed in project cycle 2 (ERLA 2025b).

My previous contributions to the ERLA cycles and projects have mainly dealt with the two written varieties of Norwegian, *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*, with focus on Nynorsk as the lesser used variety and challenges related to the status in the Norwegian society and educational system, and learning Nynorsk at school (Haugan, 2017; 2019; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024). In the present paper, we will take a closer look at an (alleged) difference in style between Bokmål and Nynorsk and choice of linguistic expression, the more or less official pedagogical advice on that topic, and some examples of actual writing practice.

One aspect of style are linguistic expressions that are commonly referred to as "noun disease" in Norwegian textbooks. We will investigate some parallel texts published by the Language Council of

Norway. These are the same texts that are written in both Bokmål and Nynorsk for (language) political reasons. The question is, then, whether noun disease can be detected in these texts, and whether the Language Council would differentiate between the Bokmål versions and the Nynorsk versions according to general writing advice found in textbooks and their own explicit advice stated on their website. We will also discuss the "value" of such parallel texts for teachers and learners of Nynorsk as their alternative written language. The main purpose of the paper is to reveal that there is a clear discrepancy between the more or less "official" view on noun disease and the form of the Nynorsk parallel texts found on the website of the Language Council of Norway. This discrepancy – when demonstrated by the Language Council itself – has the potential to undermine the whole concept of "difference in style" between the two written languages, and, thus poses a challenge for teaching and learning different styles.

But why would there be a difference in style and partly grammar between the two Norwegian written languages? To be able to understand this, we need to take a short look at the historical development of the two written languages.

Historical background

Bokmål, often referred to as Dano-Norwegian, is the Norwegian written variety that has developed from Danish written language by adaptation to Norwegian (urban) oral speech and with reference to Nynorsk (New Norwegian), the written variety based on Norwegian (non-urban) dialects (see e.g. Haugan, 2017; Vikør, 1975). After having been in a so-called personal union with Denmark for several hundred years where Danish had been the only (official) written language in Norway, this union was broken in 1814 as a result of the Napoleonic Wars. This being in the middle of the period of romanticism, a demand for a unique Norwegian written language arose. After many hundred years of history and language development, the last coherent written Norwegian language, Old Norse/Norwegian, was no longer usable as a contemporary written language since Modern Norwegian had lost most of the Old Norse inflectional system and the lexicon had been flooded by, among others, German, Dutch and Danish words and expressions. While it is possible to see a direct and very close link between Old Norse and Modern Icelandic, this is not that easy anymore when it comes to modern Norwegian. However, the resemblance between certain Norwegian dialects and Old Norse may be stronger, whereas urban speech, especially in the 1800s, was more influenced by written Danish (see e.g. Haugan, 2020c).

The demand for an official Norwegian written language ultimately led to the development of *two* official written languages, today called Bokmål (lit. 'book language' and Nynorsk (lit. 'New Norwegian').

The development of Bokmål started by keeping the Danish written language and bit by bit and little by little changing orthography, lexicon and grammar over time to make it more Norwegian, i.e. more in accordance with modern Norwegian colloquial speech. The linguistic "ideal" and reference for this written language was urban Norwegian, i.e. the way middle- and upper-class people spoke in Norwegian towns, so-called "educated speech". Educated speech was highly influenced by the written language, i.e. Danish.

Nynorsk, on the other hand, was developed on the ground of rural Norwegian dialects with a conscious goal to avoid urban "Norwegian", which was considered imperfect Norwegian because it was too "danified" (see e.g. Haugan, 2020c; Theil, 2025). Rural Norwegian was less influenced by written Danish and, hence, had a natural oral style. This oral style is basically an ideal and a reference for Nynorsk, i.e. the other Norwegian written variety. Ivar Aasen, the "founder" of Nynorsk, explicitly stated that one had to free oneself from the modern Danish style (Aasen, 1864: 380).

Since 1885, Norway has acknowledged two official Norwegian written languages, Danish-Norwegian (Danish/Riksmål, eventually Bokmål) with all the developments/reforms during the 1900s (last reform 2005), and New Norwegian (Landsmål, eventually Nynorsk) with all its developments/reforms during the 1900s (last reform 2012). Naturally, this has had consequences for the educational system. Both written languages were/are taught as mandatory subjects at school, however, one as the so-called main written language, and the other one as the alternative written language. Most pupils (approx. 85%) have Bokmål as their main written language. Bokmål is also the most dominant/visible written language in Norwegian society. As a consequence, Nynorsk has to be taught and learned more specifically/explicitly at school (see Haugan 2017 and subsequent work), and here we are at the crucial point of the historical and linguistic development.

Linguistic differences and language didactics

One didactic perspective at Bokmål and Nynorsk in an educational context is highlighting, teaching and learning the *differences* between the two varieties of Norwegian. These differences can be lexical. For instance, one would oftentimes use different words (lexical items) for the same thing. Bokmål *begravelse* (funeral) would be *gravferd* in Nynorsk (which, on the other hand, would also be valid in Bokmål). The grammatical morpheme *-else* is not considered a "good" Nynorsk morpheme, and it is avoided as much as possible. Many times, it can easily be replaced by the morpheme *-ing*, e.g. Bokmål *øvelse* (exercise) would be Nynorsk *øving* (again, this would also be valid in Bokmål). There may also be differences in conjugation. For instance, masculine nouns (actually almost all nouns) have typically *-er* in the plural in Bokmål, while most masculine nouns in Nynorsk have *-ar*: *hester* (horses) vs. *hestar*. The inflectional ending *-er* is the most common ending for feminine plural in Nynorsk, e.g. *hingstar og hopper* (stallions (m.) and mares (f.)). Then, there may be differences in the conjugation of verbs, e.g. Bokmål *treffer, traff, truffet* vs. Nynorsk *treffer, trefte, treft* (hit (pres., pret., prt.)). Conjugation exercises are typical tasks in Nynorsk classes at school and subject to both debate and hate (see e.g. Askeland et al., 2020: 139).

Another difference between Bokmål and Nynorsk may be the *style* – which is not that easily put into tables and clear descriptions. Since Nynorsk as an alternative written language is used and taught little or less in school than Bokmål, many pupils never get to the stage where they actually work with Nynorsk style. Working with grammar and orthography is often the only focus in teaching and learning Nynorsk as an alternative written language.

Here is not the place to elaborate on all aspects of writing style. In our case, it is important to understand the main historical difference between Bokmål and Nynorsk, namely that Bokmål originally developed from written Danish with reference to so-called educated speech with close ties to Danish chancery style, i.e. administrative language. Over time, it has been adapted and developed into a fully modern Norwegian language. But Bokmål on its own has at least two "styles", usually referred to as *conservative* or *moderate,* and *radical* Bokmål – roughly speaking, the former closer to Danish and the latter closer to Nynorsk, which, to some extent, can be measured by the degree of morphological variation, especially regarding *a*-endings in nouns and verbs; a) being the conservative style, and b) being the radical style:

1 a. *Melk<u>en</u> har kost<u>et</u> en krone de siste år<u>ene</u>*. (Danish: *Mælken har kostet en krone de seneste år*.)
(The milk has cost one crown the recent years.)
b. *Melk<u>a</u>/mjølka har kost<u>a</u> ei krone de siste år<u>a</u>*. (Nynorsk: *Mjølka har kosta ei krone dei siste åra*.)

Even though there is an association for radical Bokmål (since 2019), Foreninga for radialt bokmål (2025), according to Lokalhistoriewiki (2025), radical Bokmål has a relatively "weak position", and it is under pressure in academic circles (see e.g. Müller, 2017). Moderate Bokmål is clearly the most used style (cf. also Ims, 2007, and Kola, 2014), i.e. Bokmål in general is – to some degree – still influenced by an earlier/conservative way of writing which developed on the basis of written Danish. A radical version of Bokmål that is closer to dialectal/oral speech and Nynorsk does exist but is not that visible in public communication. Therefore, it should usually be possible to detect a difference in writing style between Bokmål and Nynorsk. But apart from spelling/orthography and lexical difference, what could be described as Nynorsk *style*?

What is Nynorsk style?

Given the historical development of Bokmål and Nynorsk and the accompanying public and academic debate for and against one or the other or both written varieties, naturally, the question of Nynorsk style has also been and still is a topic of discussion. The question could be very concrete and direct, for instance: "What is good Nynorsk language?", as asked by Brunstad (2009), the point being that there are obvious differences in orthography, but there is also "something" about style that would make Nynorsk "good Nynorsk".

Trying to capture what "good Nynorsk" might be, Brunstad (2009) asked 67 Nynorsk users about their personal opinions regarding "good Nynorsk". These informants were not random, "average" language users but what Brunstad described as "Nynorsk users with a close relationship to the written Nynorsk discourse" (Brunstad, 2009: 92), which were general linguists, Nordic linguists, journalists, cultural workers, editors and Nynorsk language activists. Based on handbooks in "good Nynorsk", like e.g. Breivega (1993), Fretland (2006), Almenningen (2006), Hellevik (2005), there exist some more or less concrete descriptions of "good Nynorsk", which are summarized by Brunstad (2009: 94) (my translations/adaptions):

2 1. Good Nynorsk is closer to oral speech and uses more dialect words than Bokmål.
2. Good Nynorsk uses less passive than Bokmål, and there are restrictions on the use of passive.
3. Good Nynorsk has restrictions on the use of the genitive.
4. Good Nynorsk has less use of single determined form of nouns.
5. Good Nynorsk has a more verbal expressions, therefore, one should avoid many nouns derived from verbs or adjectives when one can use verbs or adjectives (avoid the "noun disease").
6. Good Nynorsk has restrictions against heavy participle constructions.
7. Good Nynorsk has restrictions against subordination and interpolated sentences.
8. Nynorsk has a word-formation tradition that should be cultivated.

Brunstad (ibid.) states that it would be a matter of discussion whether these criteria can be considered specific for Nynorsk, but the "overuse" of nouns (so-called "noun disease"), passive and heavy sentences is generally more accepted in Bokmål than in Nynorsk (Brunstad referring to Simonsen, 1999: 43 p., Vinje, 2006, Maagerøy, 2003). In Brunstad's (2009: 103) survey, "noun disease" was on top of the list, followed by passive constructions as characteristics of "bad Nynorsk". On third place was "verbal expressions are good", which is pretty much in line with the statement that "noun disease is bad".

What is noun disease?

Breivega (1993: 78) states:

3 I nynorske tekster, både administrative, juridiske og politiske, kan vi tidt finna substantiviske uttrykksmåtar som nynorsken har teke opp i seg frå bokmål, og som kler han dårleg. Slik ordlegging kan dessutan skapa ein uturvande avstand mellom det skriftlege og den munnlege seiemåten. Nynorsk og bokmål har her fått eit sams stilproblem, som populært går under namnet «substantivsjuke».

In Nynorsk texts, both administrative, legal and political, we can often find nominal expressions that Nynorsk has taken over from Bokmål, and which do not suit it well. Such wording can also create an unnecessary distance between the written and the oral way of speaking. Nynorsk and Bokmål have here developed a common stylistic problem, which is popularly known as "noun disease". [translation into English by Google Translate]

According to Hellevik (1977: 201), the term *substantivsjuke* (noun disease) was borrowed from Swedish (meaning that there must also have been a general awareness around developing written language in a more oral direction in Swedish):

4 Uttrykket substantivsjuke har vi lånt frå svensk, og det har vorte den vanlege nemninga for omskriving med verbalsubstantiv, ofte saman med eit innhaldstomt verb og ein objektsgenitiv, i staden for å bruke eit aktivt verb.
We have borrowed the expression noun disease from Swedish, and it has become the common term for paraphrasing with a verbal noun, often together with an empty verb and an object genitive, instead of using an active verb. [translation into English by: Google Translate]

In Simonsen (1999: 212), noun disease (*substantivsjuke*) is defined as:

5 *substantivsjuke* overdreven bruk av substantiv; en setning som <u>endringer av stor viktighet fant i disse årene sted på kirkepolitikkens område</u> viser substantivering av adjektiv: **av stor viktighet** (bedre: **svært viktige**) og av verb: <u>endringer ... fant ... sted</u> (bedre: **endret seg**); et alternativ uten substantivsjuke kunne se slik ut: <u>det skjedde svært viktige endringer i kirkepolitikken i disse årene</u> eller slik: <u>kirkepolitikken endret seg mye i disse årene</u>
noun disease excessive use of nouns; a sentence such as <u>changes of great importance took place in the area of church policy in these years</u> shows substantivization of the adjective: **of great importance** (better: **very important**) and of the verb: <u>changes ... took place</u> (better: **changed**); an alternative without noun disease could look like this: <u>there were very important changes in church policy in these years</u> or like this: <u>church policy changed a lot in these years</u> [translation into English by Google Translate]

Under the heading “Noun disease and related disorders” (*Substantivsjuke og beslektede lidelser*), using some of the same examples, it is stated that (Simonsen, 1999: 44):

6 Substantivsjuke er overdreven bruk av substantiverte adjektiv og verb. En setning som <u>endringer av stor viktighet fant i disse åra sted på kirkepolitikkens område</u> viser begge typene: **av stor viktighet** (< svært viktige) og <u>endringer ... fant ... sted</u> (< endret seg). Meningsinnholdet er her uttrykt ved abstrakte substantiv, og adjektivet, respektive verbet, er formelt og semantisk redusert. Kortere og klarere kunne det samme vært sagt slik: <u>kirkepolitikken ble sterkt endret i disse åra</u>. Særlig vanlig er substantivering av verb: <u>gjere ei undersøking</u> (< undersøkje), <u>gjøre en henvendelse</u> (< henvende seg).
Noun disease is the excessive use of nounified adjectives and verbs. A sentence such as <u>changes of great importance took place in the field of church policy in these years</u> shows both types: **of great importance** (< very important) and <u>changes ... took place</u> (< changed). The meaning is here expressed by abstract nouns, and the adjective, respectively the verb, is formally and semantically reduced. The same could be said more briefly and clearly as follows: <u>church policy was greatly changed in these years</u>. Substantivization of verbs is particularly common: <u>to make an investigation</u> (< investigate), <u>to make an inquiry</u> (< contact). [translation into English by Google Translate]

Something similar is said in a textbook for Nynorsk “as the alternative written language” (Berge, 2002: 37):

7 Når det er mange verbalsubstantiv i ein tekst, kallar vi det substantivsjuke. Det bør du prøve å unngå både på bokmål og på nynorsk, men nynorsk «toler» enda mindre av slike konstruksjonar enn bokmål.

When there are many verbal nouns in a text, we call it noun disease. You should try to avoid that in both Bokmål and Nynorsk, but Nynorsk "tolerates" such constructions even less than Bokmål. [translation into English by Google Translate]

Principally, noun disease is considered equally "bad" in both Nynorsk and Bokmål, e.g. Almenningen & Søyland (2012: 16):

8 Det [substantivsjuke] gir dårleg språk som er tungt å lese, anten det er nynorsk eller bokmål.
It [noun disease] gives bad language that is difficult to read, whether it is Nynorsk or Bokmål.
[translation into English by Google Translate]

Even though Skei (1993) writes about Nynorsk, he states categorically (1993: 20):

9 Norsk språk er eit verbalspråk. Det vil seie at vi oftast bruker verb når vi skal fortelje om hendingar og handlingar, og ikkje skriv dei om til verbalsubstantiv.
The Norwegian language is a verbal language. This means that we usually use verbs when we have to tell about events and actions, and do not rewrite them as verbal nouns.
[translation into English by Google Translate]

Skei (ibid.) explains the overuse of nouns (i.e. noun disease) as influence through press, radio and tv, i.e. the language of the upper class of Oslo (here called "Løvebakkespråket"). Veka & Hellevik (1986: 70) refer to language with noun disease as "papirmål", i.e. paper language.

The relevance from a didactic / language-teaching and -learning, and text-editing point of view can be understood through the advice given in Simonsen (1999: 44):

10 Vær på vakt mot substantivsjuke i lærebokmanus på begge målformer, og pass særlig på i nynorskbøker. Forskjellen mellom nynorsk og bokmål på dette punktet er nok blitt mindre tydelig etter hvert, men fortsatt bør vi gripe noe oftere inn mot substantivering i nynorskmanus. I nynorsk har verbpreget, talemålsnær syntaks vært noe av et ideal, og som konsulenter bør vi ofte frarå eller rette setninger av den typen som er nevnt ovenfor. Blant de vanligste inngrepene er å sette inn verb i stedet for substantiv (for eksempel endre <u>**oppteljinga** av stemmene er avslutta</u> til <u>dei har no talt opp alle stemmene</u>) og å endre genitivskonstruksjoner (for eksempel *<u>på **kyrkjepolitikkens** område</u> til <u>på det **kyrkjepolitiske** området</u>; se også i 6.2.3.1). Det som her er sagt om nynorsk, er også aktuelt på bokmål, men der er substantiveringer godtatt i mye større grad.
Be on the lookout for noun disease in textbook manuscripts in both language forms, and be especially careful in Nynorsk books. The difference between Nynorsk and Bokmål on this point has probably become less clear over time, but we should still intervene somewhat more often against substantivization in Nynorsk manuscripts. In Nynorsk, verb-based, conversational syntax has been something of an ideal, and as consultants we should often advise against or correct sentences of the type mentioned above. Among the most common interventions are inserting verbs instead of nouns (for example, changing <u>the **counting** of the votes</u> to <u>they have now counted all the votes</u>) and changing genitive constructions (for example, *<u>in the area of **church politics**</u> to <u>in the **church-political** area</u>; see also 6.2.3.1). What has been said here about Nynorsk is also relevant in Bokmål, but substantivization is accepted to a much greater extent there. [translation into English by Google Translate with some corrections by the author]

As teachers and editors, we are advised to comment on and possibly suggest changes in Nynorsk texts with (too much) substantivisation of verbs, i.e. noun disease. Norsk Måldyrkingslag, "an association formed in 1928 with the aim of investigating and cultivating the Norwegian language" (Wikipedia) does not use the term *substantivsjuke*, but they state clearly (Norsk Måldyrkingslag, 1987: 14):

11 I god norsk skal me bruka verbal seiemåte så mykje som råd er. Me skal lata verbet «styra» setningane og ikkje substantivi. Substantivisk seiemåte vert ofte meir abstrakt og oppstylta bokleg. Han har opphavet sitt i latinsk stilgrunnlag og høver ikkje i norsk.
In good Norwegian, we should use verbal speech as much as possible. We should let the verb "control" the sentences and not nouns. Substantive speech is often more abstract and stylized as a book. It has its origins in Latin style and does not belong in Norwegian. [translation into English by Google Translate]

Cf. also e.g. Askeland et al. (2020: 118):

12 Unngå substantivtunge formuleringar når verb gjer betre nytte. Skriv heller «Idrettslaget skapar trivsel i bygda» enn «Idrettslaget er ein trivselfremjande faktor i bygda». (with reference to Vinje (1998)).
Avoid noun-heavy formulations when verbs are more useful. Write "The sports team creates well-being in the village" rather than "The sports team is a factor that promotes well-being in the village." [translation into English by Google Translate]

Interestingly, here the authors themselves – in their own advice to the Nynorsk learner – wrote: "når verb gjer betre nytte», i.e. 'when verbs do more use'. Even Google Translate refuses to translate this directly into the variant with the noun. This shows how common expressions like this are, and how difficult it might be to avoid them – even for those who write and teach Nynorsk. In this case, however, the noun (*nytte* (use)) is not the typical "substantivisation" of a verb or an adjective by using e.g. the morpheme -*ing* (in English, too, the verb and the noun *use* have the same morph as a stem). Therefore, it is not that obvious that the expression "gjere nytte" should be considered a classic example of noun disease. Often the textbook authors explicitly refer to direct morphological derivations, e.g. Øygarden (1989: 79), when he treats the topic of noun disease:

13 Som ein hugseregel bør du vere særleg merksam på lange ord på -heit og -ing.
As a rule of thumb, you should pay special attention to long words ending in -heit and -ing.
[translation into English by Google Translate]

or with examples referring to these derivations, e.g. Almenningen & Søyland (2012: 16):

14 To slags substantiv kan vere teikn på dårleg setningsbygnad: verbalsubstantiv (av typen *opprydding*) eller substantiv laga av adjektiv (av typen *einigheit*).
Two types of nouns can be signs of poor sentence structure: verbal nouns (of the type *tidying*) or nouns made from adjectives (of the type *unity*). [translation into English by Google Translate]

Almenningen & Søyland (2012: 17) also mention the use of "(content-)empty" verbs:

15 Substantivsjuka fører ofte til at skribenten bruker innhaldstomme verb. I staden kan vi bruke verbet som ligg til grunn for verbalsubstantivet:
«Kommunestyret føretok ei vurdering av saka.»
«Kommunestyret gjennomførte ei vurdering av saka.»
«Kommunestyret sette i verk ei vurdering av saka.» Kommunestyret
vurderte saka.

«Kommunestyret stod for ei vurdering av saka.»
«Kommunestyret gjorde saka til gjenstand for vurdering.»
Noun disease often leads the writer to use empty verbs. Instead, we can use the verb that underlies the verbal noun:
"The municipal council carried out an assessment of the case."
"The municipal council carried out an assessment of the case."
"The municipal council initiated an assessment of the case."   The municipal council assessed the case.
"The municipal council was responsible for an assessment of the case."
"The municipal council made the case the subject of assessment."
[translation into English by Google Translate with some corrections by the author]

As demonstrated above, the (over)use of nominal expressions, the so-called noun disease, is treated in many Norwegian textbooks and may be considered a well-known and accepted ideal for modern writing, especially for writing Nynorsk, but also for writing Bokmål.

Theory versus practice

The most common practices when teaching/learning Nynorsk as an alternative written language are declension exercises to train and build word paradigms. Awareness regarding noun disease may be a topic when and if the teacher him-/herself is aware of this as a Nynorsk style ideal, and if the teacher finds the time or prioritizes to teach more than just declension.

The best way of learning Nynorsk style would be through reading Nynorsk literature i.e. authentic Nynorsk texts. However, as a teacher, we would usually want to have concrete examples that the pupils can compare and work on. Norwegian prose fiction, or poetry for that matter, normally only comes in either Bokmål or Nynorsk, not in both varieties. So, there is nothing to compare directly. As shown above, Nynorsk textbooks try to illustrate noun disease by using a few examples of "good" and "bad" writing practice. A typical classroom activity might, then, be to translate sentences or whole texts from Bokmål into Nynorsk. This would also be a good activity to enhance so-called metalinguistic awareness (which also found its way as a concept into the latest Norwegian curriculum (Udir, 2025). However, this activity may be rather time consuming since there is not necessarily only one right solution/translation, and the teacher might have to act as a judge, i.e. spend time on feedback. Another way to investigate differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk would be to compare so-called parallel texts, i.e. more or less identical texts, but written in both Norwegian varieties, Bokmål and Nynorsk.

Parallel texts and methodological challenges

As mentioned above, prose fiction would usually be written in either Bokmål or Nynorsk, and normally, one would not consider it necessary or practical – or sensible – to translate prose fiction into the other Norwegian variety given the fact that every Norwegian is supposed to be able to read both varieties, not to forget that prose fiction is a work of art and the language itself is part of this piece of art and intellectual property. Hence, translating prose fiction into the other written variety (and publish it as a new text) would alter the text as a work of art.

Public texts published by state authorities, on the other hand, are subject to Norwegian law. Norwegian state institutions are (usually) supposed to use both written varieties to some extent: "Over time, central state bodies shall use at least 25 per cent of both Bokmål and Nynorsk in publicly available documents." (Lovdata, 2021: §13). Furthermore, public forms and some other texts are to be published in both written varieties: "State bodies shall make forms and other self-service services simultaneously available in Bokmål and Nynorsk."; and: "State bodies shall simultaneously publish documents intended for use in schools in both Bokmål and Nynorsk." (Lovdata, 2021: §14). This means that parallel texts do exist, and one could – potentially – use them in the classroom to investigate stylistic (and morphological and lexical) differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk.

There is just one small or rather huge catch: Texts from state bodies are, by definition, administrative texts and usually expected to be written in some kind of chancery style, i.e. among other things exhibiting noun disease instead of colloquial language with verbal expressions. This could be exactly what we want as teachers if our goal is to compare differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk.

However, another challenge in our endeavour is the fact that more than 85% use Bokmål as their main (or only) written language, and when there are parallel texts, they are most likely written in Bokmål and afterwards translated into Nynorsk. Nowadays, this kind of translation can be done instantly and automatically by using a translation programme/app. It may also be the case that the author(s) of the original Bokmål text feel competent to transfer their text into Nynorsk. Hence, we will not necessarily find genuine, authentic Nynorsk texts – and Nynorsk style – in these parallel texts. So, our problem is that we do have parallel texts in Bokmål in Nynorsk, but we cannot be sure that these texts are suitable for classroom activities where the goal is to learn differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk beyond formal grammar. Our best shot, then, might be to consult the Language Council of Norway (Språkrådet, 2025a). Not only is the Language Council as a state organisation obliged to use both written varieties of Norwegian, coming from the official language-standardising organisation, every text published by the Language Council may (by some) be considered a template or role model for "perfect" Norwegian. If the Language Council of Norway cannot produce "good Norwegian", who can?

The Language Council of Norway

The Language Council of Norway is a state organisation and "the state's consultative body on language issues". Among other tasks, they "offer advice and disseminates [*sic*] information about language, language use and language work", and "administer the correct spelling of Nynorsk and Bokmål and monitor how the languages evolve» (Språkrådet, 2025b).

"State language" has traditionally evolved from chancery style, in this case Danish (with its influences from Latin tradition). In 2008, in accordance with the aim to make written Norwegian more colloquial (plainer and clearer), and especially to make state communication more user-friendly, the Language Council of Norway started a project called "Klarspråk i staten" (plain language in the state) (Språkrådet, 2025c). Among other things, the project has a website (Språkrådet, 2025d), and a physical handbook about so-called good administrative language (Senje & Aasen 2010). Today, we have also international initiatives, like e.g. PLAIN – Plain Language Association International (PLAIN 2025).

Not surprisingly, the handbook for Norwegian (plain) administrative language by the Language Council of Norway (Senje & Aasen 2010) has a subchapter with the title "Substantivsyke", i.e. noun disease (p. 90-93). The chapter is written in Bokmål and addresses general administrative writing (which is mainly in Bokmål anyway given the distribution of Bokmål users and Nynorsk users in Norway). The writer of chapter 3 is relatively direct or blunt in his/her characterization of noun disease (Senje & Aasen 2010: 90):

16 Overdreven bruk av tunge substantiver kalles gjerne *substantivsyke*. *Saken ble gjort til gjenstand for behandling i kommunestyret* betyr bare at kommunestyret behandlet saken. Substantivtunge setninger er unødig omstendige, og de er svært tunge å lese. Hvis vi overfører dette mønsteret til et eksempel fra hverdagslivet, blir det både kunstig og klønete: å gjøre potetene til gjenstand for langvarig koking er ikke noe annet enn å koke potetene lenge. Ingen vil finne på å bruke en slik uttrykksmåte om potetkoking, men de fleste ser ut til å godta den hvis de er snakk om saksbehandling.

Excessive use of heavy nouns is often called *noun sickness*. *The matter was made the subject of consideration in the municipal council* only means that the municipal council considered the matter. Sentences heavy in nouns are unnecessarily verbose, and they are very difficult to read. If we transfer this pattern to an example from everyday life, it becomes both artificial and clumsy: making the potatoes the subject of prolonged boiling is nothing more than boiling the potatoes for a long time. No one would think of using such an expression about boiling potatoes, but most people seem to accept it if they are talking about case processing. [translation by Google translate]

Expectedly, the chapter also describes different types of noun disease (type 1, type 2, and other ways of using heavy noun expressions). The reader gets examples and suggestions on how to rewrite into plain(er) language. The (sub) chapter ends with clear advice (Senje & Aasen, 2010: 93):

17 Råd
Unngå tunge omskrivinger med substantiv.
Bruk heller konkrete verb og fortell hvem som handler.
Advice
Avoid heavy paraphrasing with nouns
Instead, use concrete verbs and tell who is doing the action. [translation by Google translate]

The book also contains a chapter with advice about Nynorsk in particular. In the introduction, the authors state (Senje & Aasen, 2010: 121):

18 Bokmål har lang tradisjon som byråkratspråk i Noreg. Mange nynorsktekstar i det offentlege blir difor skrivne med tunge bokmålstekstar som grunnlag. Vedtaksbrev på nynorsk blir ofte skrivne med utgangspunkt i lovtekstar på bokmål. Dessutan blir mange tekstar direkte omsette frå bokmål til nynorsk. Om vi byrjar i andre enden og prøver å skrive ein tekst på god nynorsk frå grunnen av, blir teksten oftast betre og klarare. Gode nynorsktekstar som ikkje er bundne av ein vanskeleg «bokmålsoriginal», kan dimed ha ein positiv verknad, ein «klarspråkseffekt», på bokmålstekstar.
Bokmål has a long tradition as the language of bureaucrats in Norway. Many Nynorsk texts in the public domain are therefore written with heavy Bokmål texts as a basis. Decision letters in Nynorsk are often written based on legal texts in Bokmål. In addition, many texts are directly translated from Bokmål into Nynorsk. If we start at the other end and try to write a text in good Nynorsk from scratch, the text usually becomes better and clearer. Good Nynorsk texts that are not bound by a difficult "Bokmål original" can therefore have a positive effect, a "plain language effect", on Bokmål texts. [translation by Google translate]

The chapter about Nynorsk has a short subchapter (5.1.3.7, p. 125) with examples of noun disease, but no extra explanation of the phenomenon (probably since it is already treated earlier in the book).

The Language Council of Norway also has a web page with writing advice under the plain-language domain (Språkrådet, 2025e). Here, one can find “general writing advice” in both Bokmål and Nynorsk, i.e. the same text written in both standards, (and Northern Sami). Also here, it is stated clearly:

19 Unngå substantivsyke. Unngå tunge omskrivninger med substantiv. Bruk heller konkrete verb når du beskriver en handling. (Bokmål)
Unngå substantivsjuke. Unngå tunge omskrivingar med substantiv. Bruk heller konkrete verb når du skildrar ei handling. (Nynorsk)
Avoid noun-sickness [noun disease]. Avoid heavy paraphrases with nouns. Instead, use concrete verbs when describing an action. [translation by Google translate]

However, if we take a closer look at the Bokmål version and the Nynorsk version, we will notice that the only difference between them is morphological and lexical, i.e. Bokmål *syke* is Nynorsk *sjuke*, bokmål *omskrivinger* is Nynorsk *omskrivingar*, and *beskriver* is *skildrar* (where one actually also could have used *beskriv*). Apart from that, the Nynorsk version is identical to the Bokmål version. One might ask: Isn't *unngå omskrivinger/omskrivingar* (avoid paraphrases) a symptom of noun disease that could have been rewritten into *unngå å skrive om* (avoid to paraphrase)?

So, how does the Language Council of Norway deal with noun disease in parallel texts in Bokmål and Nynorsk? Do they follow their own advice?

Data and discussion

Even though the Language Council of Norway is obliged to use both Bokmål and Nynorsk, they do not publish everything on their website as parallel texts (actually, surprisingly little, hence the small corpus in this survey). But one document in both varieties is *Retningslinjer for normering (av bokmål og nynorsk)* (Guidelines for standardisation (of Bokmål and Nynorsk)) (Språkrådet, 2025f). This should be a good candidate to show us how the Language Council – who we would expect to be the most competent institution within this field – would treat differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk. That being said, standardisation is mainly about orthography and declension and not necessarily about style. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Language Council clearly stated that noun disease should be avoided. This goes for both Bokmål and Nynorsk from a plain-language perspective, but it should at least be a clear stylistic/syntactic ideal for Nynorsk.

In the guidelines for standardisation (Språkrådet, 2025f), we can read (there may be some small differences in content and page numbers between the web versions and the downloaded versions):

20 Det kan gjøres justeringer i normen i lys av bruk. (web version, Bokmål, p. 13)
Det kan gjerast justeringar i norma i lys av bruk. (web version, Nynorsk, p. 12)
Adjustments can be made to the norm in light of usage. (Google translate)

21 Rettskrivningen av 2005/2012 skal ikke endres vesentlig, men det kan gjøres mindre justeringer. (Bokmål, p. 10/12)
Rettskrivinga av 2005/2012 skal ikkje endrast vesentleg, men det kan gjerast mindre justeringar. (Nynorsk, p. 10/12)
The spelling of 2005/2012 will not be changed significantly, but minor adjustments may be made. (Google translate)

22 Slike endringer for enkeltord kan gjøres selv om de innebærer utvidelse av normen på det punktet. (Bokmål, p. 12)
Slike endringar for einskildord kan gjerast sjølv om dei inneber utviding av norma på det punktet. (Nynorsk, p. 12)
Such changes for individual words can be made even if they involve an expansion of the norm at that point.

All of these three examples exhibit the construction *kan gjøres/gjeras*t (can be done) + substantivisation with *-ing*, i.e. a "classic" example of noun disease. Furthermore, the Nynorsk text is a direct word-for-word translation of the Bokmål version. Apart from small morphological differences, they are exactly the same. In (22), there is a minor lexical difference. The word *enkelt* has been replaced by *einskild* where one also could have used *enkelt* in Nyorsk. This shows that the translator has tried to make the Nynorsk text a little more different and a little more Nynorsk than strictly necessary (following a Western norm/style).

So, there is some degree of awareness when it comes to Nynorsk style or flavour, but only on a lexical level, not on a syntactic level.

The verb *gjøres/gjerast* ('to be done') is a passive verb. The use of passive is also on the un-official list of "bad Nynorsk" (number 2 on Brunstad's (2009) list) and a topic within the plain-language discourse. In the examples above, the passive construction may be considered "extra bad" seen from a plain-language perspective. It is literally saying: "it can/may be done/made adjustments/changes". The semantic agent is totally hidden in the construction, which is typical for administrative texts of this kind. The potential agent is, of course, the Language Council as the standardising authority of the state. From a plain-language perspective, the sentence would have benefited from a rewrite to e.g. "Språkrådet kan gjøre/gjera mindre endringer/endringar", i.e. "The Language Council may make small changes", and, to get rid of the substantivisation, one could rewrite the whole second part of the sentence (still with passive, though):

23 Rettskrivningen skal ikke endres vesentlig, men kan justeres litt.
Rettskrivinga skal ikkje endrast vesentleg, men kan justerast litt.
The spelling should not be changed significantly, but can be adjusted slightly. [Google translate]

And, of course, one could also rewrite it into an active sentence:

24 Språkrådet skal ikke endre rettskrivningen vesentlig, men kan justere den litt.
Språkrådet skal ikkje endre rettskrivinga vesentleg, men kan justere ho litt.
The Language Council shall not change the spelling significantly, but may adjust it slightly. [Google translate]

To make it clear, there is nothing "wrong" with these sentences from a grammatical or idiomatic point of view. They are modern Norwegian, and they "fit" as expected in an administrative text like this. However, they are not really in line with the guidelines for plain language formulated by the Language Council itself. Another example may be:

25 Når det gjelder opptak av tyske og danske importord i nynorske ordlister og ordbøker, kan Språkrådet gjøre bindende vedtak, jf. § 3 i vedtektene. (Bokmål, p. 13)
Når det gjeld opptak av tyske og danske importord i nynorske ordlister og ordbøker, kan Språkrådet gjera bindande vedtak, jf. § 3 i vedtektene. (Nynorsk, p. 13)
When it comes to the inclusion of German and Danish import words in Nynorsk glossaries and dictionaries, the Language Council can make binding decisions, cf. Section 3 of the statutes. [Google translate]

Again, it strikes us that the Nynorsk version is a direct word-for-word translation/transformation. There is no attempt to change the syntax or style of the Nynorsk version. The examples of noun disease may be less visible here since there is no *-ing* derivation. The two nouns in question are *opptak* (inclusion(s)) and *vedtak* (decision(s)) that are derived from the verbs *ta opp* (to include (take up/in)) and *vedta* (decide). One could instead have written:

26 Når det gjelder <u>å ta opp</u> tyske og danske importord i nynorske ordlister og ordbøker, kan Språkrådet <u>vedta</u> <u>dette</u> (med bindende kraft), jf. § 3 i vedtektene. (Bokmål, p. 15)
Når det gjeld <u>å ta opp</u> tyske og danske importord i nynorske ordlister og ordbøker, kan Språkrådet <u>vedta dette</u> (med bindande kraft), jf. § 3 i vedtektene. (Nynorsk, p. 15)
When it comes to including German and Danish import words in Nynorsk glossaries and dictionaries, the Language Council can decide this (with binding force), cf. Section 3 of the statutes. [Google translate]

A genre feature of “classic” administrative/legal texts is the extensive use of nouns/substantivisation in the way we have seen here. Changing these expressions into more verbal expressions would, of course, affect the formal style of these documents. But according to the plain-language initiative, using more verbal expressions is one of the explicit goals.
Yet another example of noun disease in standardisation documents:

27 Språkrådet kan også i visse tilfeller gjøre en mer systematisk gjennomgang av termlister og termbaser. (Bokmål, p. 14)
Språkrådet kan også i visse høve gjera ein meir systematisk gjennomgang av termlister og termbasar. (Nynorsk, p. 14)
The Language Council can also, in certain cases, conduct a more systematic review of term lists and term bases. [Google translate]

There is no *-ing* or *-heit* derivation here, but we find the typical *gjøre/gjera* + noun instead of using a verb, ‘to conduct a review’ instead of just ‘to review’, i.e. *gjennomgå*. The translator changed *tilfeller* to *høve* (which is perceived to be more Nynorsk) where one quite as well could have used *tilfelle* in Nynorsk. But there is no syntactic/stylistic change – as there is none in the whole text.
In the next example:

28 Siden Språkrådet har manglet normeringsfullmakter inntil desember 2012, er mange spørsmål utsatt med tanke på senere behandling. (Bokmål, p. 8)
Sidan Språkrådet har mangla normeringsfullmakter inntil desember 2012, er mange spørsmål utsette med tanke på seinare handsaming. (Nynorsk, p. 8)
Since the Language Council lacked standardization powers until December 2012, many issues have been postponed for later consideration. [Google translate]

med tanke på senere behandling (with respect to later processing) could easily be rewritten to ‘to be processed/treated later”, i.e. *for å bli behandlet/handsama senere/seinare*.
The same goes for:

29 For behandling av importord og nyord er det også utarbeidet særskilte retningslinjer, se pkt. 9. (Bokmål, p. 8)
For handsaming av importord og nyord er det også utarbeidd særskilde retningslinjer, sjå pkt. 9. (Nynorsk, p. 8)
Special guidelines have also been drawn up for the treatment of imported words and neologisms, see section 9.

Instead of *for behandling av importord* (for the treatment of imported words), one could easily have written ‘to treat”, i.e. *for å behandle/handsame importord*. One could also have avoided the passive here (i.e. the passive could have been avoided). Instead of ‘guidelines have been worked out’, one could have written *Språkrådet har utarbeidet/utarbeidd særskilte/særskilde retningslinjer*, i.e. ‘the Language Council has worked out special guidelines’.
Skje (take place) + verbal noun is another typical candidate for noun disease:

30 Terminologiutvikling må derfor skje i fagmiljøene. (Bokmål, p. 13)
Terminologiutvikling må derfor skje i fagmiljøa. (Nynorsk, p. 13)
Terminology development must therefore take place in professional environments. [Google translate]

We observe the general pattern that the Nynorsk version is a word-for-word translation of the Bokmål version, and we notice that the author(s) and/or translators have not been aware of or have not made a great effort to follow their own guidelines for plain language. Here it says: ‘Terminology development must take place' where one easily could have written 'terminology must be developed…', i.e. *terminlogi må derfor bli utviklet/utvikla i fagmiløene/fagmiljøa*.

The investigation of the (few) parallel texts published by the Language Council of Norway shows that one has chosen to translate the texts word for word, only making morphological and possibly lexical changes where necessary for orthographic-standard reasons or when there was a "better" Nynorsk word (lexical reasons), while there are no syntactical differences. Since these are administrative texts within a guidance or even legal genre, the reason for not making major changes is most likely that one wanted to make the two versions as identical and comparable as possible, minimising the possibility of interpreting them differently. This comes at the expense of idiomatic/stylistic differences and recommended language advice stated by the Language Council itself.

From a language-ideology and teaching perspective, this may be problematic in several ways. In the same document (Språkrådet, 2025f), Bokmål and Nynorsk version, sections 5.2 and 6.2), it is stated explicitly that the two written languages should be standardised on the basis of their own written practice and development, and independently of each other. As mentioned before, standardisation first of all regards orthography and declension. However, the document(s) also say(s) that (6.2.3): 'The essential basis for standardizing written Nynorsk is the language as it appears in Nynorsk texts, with particular emphasis on texts that are considered norm-forming' (Google translate). By definition, the Nynorsk versions of the texts authored by the Language Council are "Nynorsk texts", i.e. they are part of a corpus that shows how Nynorsk may "appear", and these texts may be used to define what should be considered norm-forming, i.e. we have a kind of "vicious circle". If there were no genuine Nynorsk texts written on their own terms, these translated texts may give the impression that there are no major differences between Bokmål and Nynorsk other than minor morphological and lexical differences.

From a teaching perspective, this may obviously be a good starting point. Nynorsk learning pupils would not be "scared" by major stylistic and idiomatic difference, they would only see the morphological and lexical differences, which is also the most typical focus in classroom activities when teaching and learning Nynorsk. As a pupil, one would typically be asked to either produce complete Nynorsk noun or verb paradigms (conjugation tables), or one would be asked to use the right inflection form in a text with blank spaces.

From a language-ideological and language-political point of view (if we ignore the legal and interpretational aspects of parallel texts like these), on the other hand, the Nynorsk versions are very problematic. The translations clearly show that the Nynorsk version is not independent of the Bokmål version. On the contrary, the Nynorsk text is based on the Bokmål text to the extreme, i.e. it is a word-for-word translation with no syntactic or stylistic difference at all. Against the Language Council's own advice, the Nynorsk translations consequently adopt all instances of noun disease and other phrasing from the Bokmål texts.

So, are the Nynorsk translations by the Language Council "bad"? There is no clear answer to this question. From a holistic perspective, both Bokmål and Nynorsk are written representatives of "The Norwegian language", i.e. one would not necessarily expect major differences between the two varieties other than those connected to different standardisation of orthography and the lexicon. Given the fact that every Norwegian speaker should be able to express her-/himself through either written variety of Norwegian, the written outcome would naturally be based on the way the language user feels natural to express her-/himself in writing. The result would be Norwegian by definition, and adaptation to written text would mainly be choosing the "right" standard when it comes to orthography and possibly the lexicon (e.g. in cases where dialect words might not be standardised).

Then there is the aspect of genre and style. Written language is often different from the way we speak in casual conversation. While one might say "Shut up!" in an oral context, one might possibly want to moderate the expression to "Would you please be quiet?" or some other milder way of saying the same, i.e. we are normally respecting that there may be the different rules/conventions for oral speech versus written language. If we accept that written language is slightly different from oral speech, with all its different registers, dialects and sociolects, we may also accept that Bokmål and Nynorsk may be different from each other, even by law, cf. section 4 in the Act on Language (Lovdata, 2021):

31 **Section 4. *Norwegian language***
Norwegian is the primary national language in Norway.
Bokmål and Nynorsk are Norwegian languages with equal value that can be used in all parts of society.
Bokmål and Nynorsk have equal standing as written languages in public bodies.

The investigated texts show that Bokmål and Nynorsk are treated as legally equal languages in the way that both are used to convey the same content of the document(s) and, thus, do the same administrative and official "job" as state documents. Given the fact that the differences in these texts are limited to orthography and very few times also to the lexicon, one could wonder whether it is really necessary to have them as parallel texts (which is something that is also frequently debated in public due to the economic aspect). The only obvious reason is political. Since language standardisation is crucial in the educational system, one might say that the following statement from section 14 of the Language Act applies (Lovdata, 2021):

32 State bodies shall simultaneously publish documents intended for use in schools in both Bokmål and Nynorsk.

Generally, everyone in Norway learns to read (and possibly write) both Bokmål and Nynorsk during primary and secondary school. From that perspective, there would not be a reason to have parallel texts of the same document – especially not when the potential differences are minimised like in the investigated documents. The use of parallel texts is first of all connected to democratic, individual rights and the way one has chosen to deal with the two written languages in Norway, cf. e.g. also Section 15 in the Language Act (Lovdata, 2021):

33 In documents addressed to a private legal person, state bodies and county authorities shall use the written Norwegian language which the private legal person itself has used in communication with the body, or which the private legal person has otherwise stated that it wishes to use.

One could say that by using the "appropriate" language in communication with the citizens, one shows respect for the individual linguistic choice of the individual citizen. However, strictly speaking, serving Nynorsk users a pale "shadow image" of Bokmål where the only aspect that has been treated seriously is spelling and word choice, could be considered less respectful, either to the individual Nynorsk user or the ideal of Nynorsk as a language in its own right.

If one chooses to work with parallel texts like these in the classroom, this aspect should absolutely be discussed and reflected upon. The translations into Nynorsk are definitely not "wrong" from a strict standardisation standpoint. They are 100% correct – formally, but one may still say that they are "bad" Nynorsk from the perspective of Brunstad's criteria (2009) and all the textbooks that explicitly mention noun disease as a criterium of "bad" Nynorsk. Despite the Language Council's own advice, the awareness of noun disease got lost in translation.

Conclusion

"Noun disease", the (over)use of complex noun constructions and substantivisation (noun derivation from verbs and adjectives), is generally considered "bad" language, first of all, in Nynorsk texts, but in principle also in Bokmål. Most textbooks explicitly list and/or discuss noun disease as something that should be avoided. Even the Language Council of Norway mentions noun disease in guidelines and advice on written language. However, noun disease does not seem to be that serious that a text would "get sick" or even "die" of it. The parallel texts by the Language Council of Norway that were investigated here show many examples of noun disease and as far as we know, no one has publicly complained about this. What is more striking, though, is the fact that the Language Council has not made any attempt to alter the Nynorsk translations other than following the standard for Nynorsk orthography and lexicon. The Nynorsk versions are word-for-word translations that follow the Bokmål version slavishly. There is no deviation from Bokmål in syntax or formulation that one would expect in idiomatic Nynorsk texts. While one may say that this "good" from the perspective of guaranteeing the comparability of the texts as legal documents, one may say that this is "bad" from the aspect of respecting Nynorsk as a language with its own history and style, and respecting Nynorsk users' right to read idiomatic and authentic Nynorsk texts instead of mediocre translations of Bokmål texts. Maybe the content is not lost in translation, but Nynorsk as a language is. From the perspective of teaching and learning Nynorsk, this topic should be raised and addressed. The linguistic practice described in this paper may also serve as a case within translation studies and language policy analyses and should be investigated in a broader context in future studies.

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Language immersion and socialization of Ukrainian newcomer students in the example of school X of Narva city in Estonia

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Abstract
The article is devoted to the issues of language immersion and socialization of Ukrainian schoolchildren – new immigrants studying in one of the comprehensive schools in the city of Narva, in Estonia. The aim of the work is to identify factors influencing the success of the adaptation of immigrant children including learning Estonian language, intercultural interaction and forms of support provided by the school and families. Particular attention is paid to the language immersion strategies used by teachers, as well as the role of parents in the educational and social processes. It has been established that the motivation of students, teaching methods and availability of psychological and academic support have a significant impact on the dynamics of adaptation. The article also discusses the difficulties that students face at the initial stage and ways to overcome them with the participation of the school community. The research is based on semi-structured individual interviews.

Keywords: *language socialization, educational integration, intercultural interaction Ukrainian students, Estonian-language educational environment, Russian-language educational environment, motivation for language learning, native language*

Introduction

According to statistics, over the past ten years, the number of children of new immigrants aged 0 to 14 in Estonia has almost quadrupled – from 434 in 2012 to 1,601 in 2021 (Vanahans et al., 2023). The term new immigrant in Estonia means a person who has lived in the country for less than five years and has received a temporary residence permit (Kultuuriministeerium, 2023). In terms of students, these are usually children who have arrived from the European Union or third countries and have been in Estonia for less than three years (EHIS, 2016). Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 and the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC), more than 7,200 Ukrainian children have been enrolled in Estonian schools (Politsei-ja Piirivalveamet, 2022).

Newcomer schoolchildren face many difficulties related to linguistic, social and cultural adaptation. Researches show that the first months in a new country are accompanied by a feeling of insecurity, difficulties in interacting with teachers and peers, and limited participation in the learning process (Picchio & Mayer, 2015). Researchers emphasize the need for comprehensive support, including language skill development, individual approaches, interaction with families and cultural sensitivity in teaching (Järv & Kirss, 2019, Horgan et al., 2022).

Among the measures aimed at integrating immigrants into the educational system, a special place is occupied by language immersion programs, which have proven their effectiveness in a multilingual and multicultural environment (Heo, 2022). *Language immersion* is an integrated method of implementing subject and language learning, where teaching takes place in two or more languages (Mehisto, 2009). In the context of this article, it means learning in Estonian as the target language based on the Estonian national curricula (at least 60% of subject lessons are conducted in Estonian) (ibid.). At the same time, despite the prevalence of such programs in Estonia, empirical studies focusing on the specific mechanisms of adaptation of Ukrainian students in individual schools are still insufficient.

This article is a qualitative case study of the process of linguistic and social adaptation of Ukrainian schoolchildren in one of the schools in the city of Narva in Estonia. The theoretical basis of the work includes the concepts of language immersion, school integration and intercultural socialization. The role of school and family as key agents of adaptation is also considered, as well as the influence of motivation, age, previous educational experience and language environment on the process of mastering Estonian language.

The aim of the research is to examine the features of language immersion and socialization of Ukrainian students at Narva School X, as well as to identify factors that facilitate or hinder the adaptation process.

In this regard, the following research questions were formulated:

- What difficulties do Ukrainian students face when adapting in School X, and how do they overcome them?
- What pedagogical and supportive practices do teachers and school staff use?
- How does language immersion occur, and how do students cope with the transition to using Estonian language?
- What role do parents play in the educational and social integration of their children?
- How do Ukrainian students socialize in the school environment?

The article first examines theoretical approaches related to the adaptation of immigrants in the educational environment. This is followed by a description of the empirical study, including semi-structured interviews with participants in the educational process. The work is summarized with a discussion of the results and conclusions relevant for pedagogical practical use and further research.

Theoretical background

On February 24, 2022, Russia began war against Ukraine causing the largest migration wave to Estonia in decades. In 2022, the migration increase amounted to 49,414 people and two-thirds of them were Ukrainian citizens. Since the beginning of the war, more than 122,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Estonia, of whom about 67,000 have stayed long-term (Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, 2024). Since the majority of new immigrants in recent years have come from Ukraine, thus country has become an important partner for Estonia in migration processes, and therefore plays a significant role in integration and cultural diversity policy (Jauhiainen & Erbsen, 2023).

This situation requires effective integration solutions from the state and the education system. Fast and sustainable mastering of Estonian language is considered a key factor for successful adaptation (Stelmakova & Zabrodskaja, 2024). Although knowledge of Russian is common among Ukrainian immigrants and facilitates initial interactions (Bilaniuk, 2010; Kaldur et al., 2019), it is the Estonian language that determines opportunities for education, employment and participation in social life (Jauhiainen & Erbsen, 2023).

As estimated for 2022, only 1% of Ukrainian adults had an intermediate level of Estonian, and a significant proportion of children continued their education in Estonian schools (Haridussilm, 2024). This is due to the choice of parents focused on the future of their children and the possibility of integration (Lauri et al., 2016). At the same time, schools have become multilingual, which requires cultural flexibility and appropriate training from teachers (Rüütmaa et al., 2023).

Linguistic adjustment

New immigrant students face adaptation in three dimensions: linguistic, social and cultural (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011). State programs include language courses, cultural orientation and educational support (Kultuuriministeerium, 2023). Although schools have no formal obligation to organize teaching Estonian as a second language, many do so on their own initiative (Kaldur et al., 2021).

Preparatory classes and language immersion programs have become an important direction. However, the research shows that the isolation in such classes can hinder socialization (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). An alternative is bilateral immersion programs, in which study is conducted in two languages, which contributes to the development of sustainable bilingualism (Kallas & Küün, 2019).

Motivation is a decisive factor in successful language mastering. Dörnyei (2001) distinguishes integrative and instrumental motivation as complementary. Game methods, reliance on students' experiences and group work are important (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011). An atmosphere of trust and confidence, including parental involvement and innovative approaches, such as involving the child as an assistant to younger children, are also important (Haridus-ja Noorteamet, 2021).

Social adaptation

Cultural transition has a significant impact on the social connections and emotional state of the child (Hamilton, 2013). The adaptation period, which covers the first five years after migration, includes gradual involvement in the personal, educational and social spheres of life (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011, Kultuuriministeerium, 2023). However, integration requires a long-term support (Kaldur et al., 2019).

The migration experience is associated with multi-level stress, from traumatic events to the difficulties of the post-migration stage (Foo et al., 2018). Key factors influencing adaptation are the language barrier, the breakdown of social ties and cultural differences (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019). At the same time, a sense of security and belonging plays a decisive role in successful socialization (Foo et al., 2018).

Breach of discipline, withdrawnness and "silent periods" may be reactions to stress and culture shock, rather than signs of developmental gap (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011). Students with a different native language are more likely to experience bullying and feel isolated (Eurydice, 2019).

Effective engagement strategies include pair and group work, dialogue forms and visual materials (Horgan et al., 2022). It is important to create an environment in which the child feels like a full member of the school community.

According to the concept of holistic education, attention should be paid not only to academic achievements, but also to emotional and social well-being (Okeke, 2014). At the same time, consistent support is possible only with the active participation of the family, which is an important source of social capital (Turney & Kao, 2009).

Cultural adaptation

Cultural adaptation requires a willingness to change behavior patterns in accordance with the norms of the new environment (Pajupuu, 2000; Soll & Palginõmm, 2011). According to Berry's model (Berry et al., 1992), the best-case scenario is integration, in which the individual retains his or her native culture while learning the language and norms of the host society. Successful integration requires efforts from both sides: the migrant and the host society (Muldma & Nõmm, 2011).

Education in Estonia is aimed at development of citizens who respect the laws and culture of the country and are ready to interact in a democratic society (Muldma & Nõmm, 2011). In this context, culturally sensitive teaching is becoming increasingly important – an approach that takes into account the cultural background of students when selecting methods and content (Hammond, 2015). Visual materials and methodological recommendations are effective (ibid.), as well as the analysis of cultural differences through Hofstede's model (see Hofstede, 2017).

Leirman (2003) describes education as a dialogue and a process of mutual understanding. The teacher plays a key role in breaking down stereotypes and building tolerance (Tseng, 2020). Stereotypes change with increasing cultural awareness, as well as through the recognition of diversity within ethnic groups (Mitchell, 2016).

A teacher working in a multicultural environment should be a mediator between cultures, avoid ethnocentrism and broadcast the values of openness (Slemp et al., 2017). A successful practice is the inclusion of intercultural content in subject teaching, which positively affects academic achievements (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

An example is the Netherlands, which have implemented a multicultural education program integrated into the curriculum since 1990s. It helps to develop empathy and dialogue without focusing on ethnicity (Muldma & Nõmm, 2011). Some schools in Estonia, including Tallinna Lilleküla Gümnaasium, have adopted a similar approach (Küün, 2019).

Definitely, parents play an important role in the socialization of children: they explain them their origin, reasons for migration and form an emotional connection with their native culture (Apitzsch et al., 2015). At the same time, children often adapt faster than their parents – through school and peers (ibid.). It is important to provide children with the opportunity to keep their cultural identity, while simultaneously developing civic consciousness and interest in other cultures (Vetik et al., 2017, Kalmus et al., 2022).

Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was used as a methodological basis, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the individual experiences of new immigrants in a specific educational environment.

A semi-structured interview method was used to collect data, which provides a combination of pre-determined logic and flexibility to reveal the individual opinions and feelings of the participants (Laherand, 2008). The questions covered topics such as adaptation difficulties, teaching approaches, mastering of Estonian language, parental involvement and student motivation.

Eight respondents were included in the study: three students from grades 1, 4 and 8, three Estonian language teachers, one physical education teacher and a deputy principal. The sample was purposefully formed based on relevant experience of interaction with Ukrainian students (Õunapuu, 2014). The sample size was considered sufficient to achieve the goals of the qualitative analysis (Laherand, 2008).

Interviews were conducted in 2025 on the territory of School X in Narva city. Before interviewing, written consents were obtained from the parents of minor participants, as well as voluntary consents from the students and adult respondents.

All interviews were voice recorded, transcribed manually and translated into Estonian. In order to ensure confidentiality, all personal data were anonymized, and the participants were given pseudonyms (EÕ1 – Estonian language teacher no. 1, EÕ2 – Estonian language teacher no. 2, EÕ3 – Estonian language teacher no. 3, KKÕ – physical education teacher, ÕA – principal deputy. Three students from Ukraine were also interviewed. All ethical standards were taken into account in this study.

The collected data were analyzed using the method of qualitative thematic content analysis, aimed at identifying recurring semantic units and grouping them into thematic categories (Laherand, 2008). The following key categories were identified during the analysis: "adaptation difficulties", "teaching methods", "Estonian language", "parents", "socialization" and "motivation".

The working language of the interviews was Russian, as the most comfortable for all participants. This contributed to openness and reduced the psychological barrier. Despite the fact that the study was conducted outside the Ukrainian diaspora, the issues of integration of Ukrainian students into the educational space of Estonia are considered relevant and require further study.

Results

Adaptation difficulties

Adaptation of students from Ukraine to an Estonian school is associated with a number of challenges: language barrier, cultural differences and emotional difficulties. The process is especially difficult for high school students who are starting to learn Estonian practically from scratch. Communication is also complicated by poor knowledge of Russian and English, which makes studying and interaction difficult (based on information received form the EÕ1, EÕ2 and ÕA). In some cases, students do not have sufficient knowledge of either Estonian or Russian, which requires a special pedagogical approach. For example, one sixth-grade student began his studies with a language level corresponding to a preschool level and needed constant support (EÕ1). It happens that children are afraid to speak Estonian fearing mistakes or being misunderstood (EÕ2).

Significant stress is also created by the double academic load: according to ÕA many Ukrainian schoolchildren simultaneously continue their studies in a Ukrainian online school. This means not only a longer school day, but also the need to complete assignments in two educational systems, which often leads to fatigue, decreased motivation for learning, and emotional burnout.

Cultural differences affect both learning practices and everyday norms. They manifest themselves in the perception of discipline, role expectations, and forms of communication. One of the teachers (EÕ2) noted that some parents did not consider it necessary to monitor homework, as they assumed that their stay in Estonia would be temporary. Such attitude was transferred to the children and adversary affected their motivation to study.

Social barriers are especially acute in the first months – it is difficult for students to establish contacts, which is aggravated by the stress of moving and the uncertainty of the future. However, participation in group activities – such as physical education lessons, clubs, and school events – has a prominent positive effect on socialization. KKÕ gives an inspiring example of successful integration through sport:

“One boy from Ukraine is a kickboxing champion. But he started playing volleyball because his friends were there. Now he is the Estonian volleyball champion. He represents the school in all competitions” (KKÕ).

This case shows how an informal environment and peer support can be key factors in successful adaptation to a new educational and cultural context.

Learning methodologies and support

In order to overcome the difficulties, School X uses customized educational strategies: adapted teaching materials, visual and digital resources, language immersion methods, and additional classes. Each student has an individual program with the participation of a social worker and a school psychologist (ÕA). The primary school uses accelerated curricula that span several school years (EÕ2). However, excessive attention to one student can distract from the others, reducing the effectiveness of the overall learning process.

Flexible assessment is used: for example, in some cases the minimum passing score has been reduced to 30% (EÕ1). This allows students to experience less stress and focus on learning the material.

Teachers use multilingual materials, visual aids, game tasks and exercises in pairs. The immersion method is the principle of “one teacher – one language” (May, 2017), supplemented by study trips to an Estonian-speaking environment and the “speaking walls” method – placing key words and diagrams on the walls of the classroom, in the design of which the students themselves participate (Rannut, 2005). However, the use of “speaking walls” is limited by the lack of space, movements between classrooms and the need to pre-train children in the use of visual materials based on information received from teachers.

During lessons, teachers use digital platforms such as Wordwall and Opiq, which help to practice vocabulary and grammar in a form of a game increasing student engagement (Horgan et al., 2022). After lessons, students were offered additional Estonian language classes, as well as a Ukrainian language and literature club organized by a visiting teacher from Ukraine. However, these forms of support faced limitations: additional Estonian lessons were discontinued already in the second half of the year due to the high workload of teachers, and the Ukrainian language club was only available to younger students (grades 1-6). Psychological support is also available, but according to respondents, only a small number of students use it.

Linguistic development among students

Efficient mastering of Estonian is the key to integration. Despite the initial zero level, students show progress due motivation and support. Lessons are taught entirely in the target language and include reading, writing, listening and speaking tasks. Various forms are used – individual, work in pairs and group work.

According to teachers' observations, the greatest difficulties are caused by grammar – declensions, prepositions as well as pronunciation of Estonian language specific sounds such as *ü*, *ö* and *ä* (according to EÕ1, EÕ3). Homework is adjusted to the students' level and is aimed at consolidating the material covered. Teachers recommend using online vocabulary resources. However, the completion of assignments varies greatly: motivated students complete them regularly, while others avoid them especially in the absence of parental support (EÕ2).

Progress is especially noticeable among those students who receive support from their families and are actively involved in school life. There are cases where students with a zero level achieved a confident understanding of the language in a few months and participated in discussions in class. Despite the differences in the pace of language learning, according to the principal deputy (ÕA), all students from Ukraine were certified in Estonian with positive grades at the end of the school year.

Role of parents in adaptation

Parents play a decisive role in shaping motivation. Their attitude towards their stay in Estonia and importance of Estonian language is passed on to their children. When parents show indifference or ignore the need to learn the language, their children lose interest in learning and their results deteriorate (EÕ2).

"Parents should also guide their children: "You have to study. We live here /in Estonia/, you have to learn this /Estonian/ language"–. And not like this: "We'll leave in two years, and everything will somehow work out on its own."" (EÕ2)

Support can be expressed in basic monitoring of homework, assistance in completing it, as well as in using eKool systems and online translators to communicate with school. Some parents initiate the organization of events: for example, a Ukrainian mother suggested opening a Ukrainian language and literature club (ÕA).

Active participation of parents in school life – as accompanying person at events, organizers of holidays, participants in meetings and developmental discussions – strengthens the cooperation between the family and the school. This creates, according to the respondents, an atmosphere of trust and support that facilitates the successful integration of students.

Socialization of students

In the early stages of adaptation, in X School of Narva (which is a border city and is located right next to Russia), conflicts and misunderstandings were observed due to cultural differences and emotional stress, according to the ÕA. For example, there were cases when local students provoked newcomers with statements like "Glory to Putin", which caused conflicts and required the intervention of the school administration (ÕA, EÕ1). In addition, teachers noted episodes of making fun of the pronunciation of Ukrainian students in Estonian lessons, as well as conflicts caused by misunderstandings of certain statements.

Over time, the situation stabilized, based on an interview with ÕA. The school implemented preventive measures: conversations with students, the participation of social workers, informing parents. The language of communication between students is mostly Russian, which helps students from Ukraine to quickly find contact with classmates and get involved in school life.

Most students said that they have made friends with whom they spend time both at school and outside of it. Trusting relationships with teachers have been established. Some students have become active participants in school events, and in some cases even class leaders (KKÕ).

"They have adapted so quickly that they have even become class leaders. They participate in all our competitions. /.../ One boy studied with us in the ninth grade for only six months. When he left, it was a real loss for us – we still remember him. /.../ He joined the team from the first day, he was very friendly." (KKÕ)

Motivation and individual accomplishments of students

It can be assumed that high learning motivation is a key factor in successful integration. Some students are independent and persistent, ask for extra lessons, and look for opportunities to improve their knowledge. One example is a tenth-grade student who independently managed to return to extra lessons after the teacher went on maternity leave, because "it was important for her to continue her studies" (ÕA).

Teachers emphasize the importance of treating newcomers fairly: they should not be seen as a weak link, and their support as the school's responsibility. At the same time, the emphasis is on a two-way process: success is possible with an active position of the students themselves and conscious support from the family (Järv & Kirss, 2019).

Thus, the results of the research show that with comprehensive support – from teachers, parents and the school community – newcomer students from Ukraine can successfully overcome cultural and language barriers. They are capable fully integrate into Estonian school environment demonstrating confident academic and social results even under stress and uncertainty.

Discussion

The results of the conducted research confirm that the main aspects of adaptation of students who arrived from Ukraine to Estonia are linguistic, cultural and social integration (Soll & Palginõmm, 2011). The data obtained show that the main obstacles on this path are limited knowledge of Estonian language, insufficient proficiency in Russian and English, as well as psychological stress caused by the military situation and a sudden change in environment. These factors contribute to increased anxiety and make it difficult to study and socialize. In addition, some students have decreased motivation, which, as the analysis showed, can be associated not only with emotional overload, but also with parents' attitudes.

As experience of School X has shown, the school is able to play a key role in reducing these barriers. The use of individual educational programs, flexible assessment, visual and multilingual materials, language immersion methods and additional psychological support help to ensure conditions for the progressive development and inclusion of students in the educational environment. Experience shows that a particularly important element is the opportunity for students to interact with native speakers in a natural environment, which, given the limited Estonian-speaking area in Narva, is compensated for by study trips to other regions of Estonia.

Despite the existing risks, such as the excessive role of the teacher in communication or excessive use of the intermediary language (Russian), the approach with flexible integration of language support and cultural sensitivity yields positive results. For example, short summaries in Russian at the end of lessons help to master new material without disrupting the overall structure of language immersion. As became clear from the research on which this article is based, the use of visual materials and game methods, also pair and group work, especially at the initial stages of learning, helps to reduce anxiety and consolidate the material. This partially coincides with the research findings of Horgan and his colleagues mentioned above (see Horgan et al., 2022).

The effectiveness of involving teachers with native Ukrainian language has also been proven. Holding Ukrainian language and culture clubs has a double effect: on the one hand, it supports the identity and emotional well-being of students, and on the other hand, it strengthens the trust of families in the school. This is consistent with research showing that culturally responsive education promotes better academic outcomes (see e.g. Taylor & Sobel, 2011).

At the level of parental involvement, there is a strong relationship between family involvement in the educational process and the child's academic success. Parents who actively use electronic platforms and participate in meetings and dialogues with teachers contribute to more successful adaptation of their children. This is in line with broader observations that partnership between school and family is a key factor in the success of migrant children (cf. Kaldur et al., 2021).

In terms of students' social adaptation, the current data show a wide range of individual experiences: from conflicts in the initial period to full integration and achievement of class leadership positions. This indicates the importance of the interpersonal environment, peer support, as well as the communication skills and personal characteristics of the students themselves. At the same time, teachers' constructive response to arising difficulties – through dialogue, attention and prevention – also plays an important role. These results completely coincide with what was mentioned in the theoretical part of this article (see Järv & Kirss, 2019).

In relation to the first research question – what difficulties do students from Ukraine experience and how do they overcome them – it was found that the main challenges are the language barrier, cultural differences, and social and emotional difficulties. The language barrier is most acute in senior classes, where knowledge of academic vocabulary in Estonian is required. Some students are afraid to speak Estonian or do not speak Russian at all, which complicates communication. The psycho-emotional state is also complicated by the double academic load and stress associated with moving from Ukraine. However, School X uses a comprehensive approach to overcome these difficulties: individual curricula, adapted materials, psychological support, cooperation with parents, and a flexible assessment system.

The second research question – what support methods do teachers use to help with adaptation and mastering the Estonian language – is revealed through the experience of School X. Here, the language immersion method, the "one teacher – one language" principle, the "speaking walls" method, and visual teaching materials are used, which has also been suggested by other researchers (see Rannut, 2005, May, 2017). Teachers actively use game-based approaches and digital platforms (e.g. Opiq and Wordwall). Individual consultations and additional Estonian language classes are held. Accelerated curricula are being introduced in elementary grades. The importance of short explanations in Russian for consolidation of key concepts was also during current study noted.

The third research question – how does the language integration of students proceed – showed that motivation is the main factor in successful mastering of Estonian. Those students who receive parental support, complete assignments and actively participate in lessons demonstrate high progress. At the same time, less motivated students stagnate. The teachers who participated in the study on which this article is based noted that difficulties associated quite often with pronunciation of sounds and mastering Estonian grammatical structures. Nevertheless, all research participants finished the school year with positive results in Estonian.

As to the fourth research question – what is the role of parents in the adaptation process – it was found that family involvement directly affects academic performance. Active parents use electronic systems, attend meetings and interact with teachers. They help with homework, use translators to communicate with the school and support children in the educational process. With insufficient involvement, a decrease in academic motivation is observed. It can be assumed that parental support is indeed a very important aspect of new immigrant students' adaptation to a new language, culture and school environment. This has also been pointed out, for example, by Kaldur, along with his co-researches, already mentioned in the theoretical part of this article (see Kaldur et al., 2021).

The fifth research issue – how is the socialization of Ukrainian students going – shows that most students have successfully integrated into school community. Although initially conflicts and misunderstandings were recorded, over time the students find friends, become active participants in school life and even take leading positions in the class. Conflicts are mainly resolved through dialogue with the participation of teachers and administration.

Thus, it can be concluded that effective integration of students from Ukraine into Estonian educational system is possible provided that there is a consistent approach on the part of the school, motivation of students and support from parents. School X shows an example of relatively successful experience combining flexibility, an individual approach and cultural sensitivity.

The limitations of this research are related to its local nature – it was conducted only in one school. In the future, it is recommended to conduct larger-scale and longitudinal studies that will allow us to track the long-term dynamics of student adaptation and develop universal strategies for educational policy in the context of migration pressure.

Conclusion

This study allowed us to analyze the processes of linguistic and social adaptation of students who arrived from Ukraine to Estonia using one specific school as an example. Using qualitative analysis methods and relying on interviews with students, teachers and administration, the work showed that successful integration into the school environment depends on a set of interrelated factors: students' motivation, pedagogical support, family involvement and conditions created by the educational institution.

The data show that the main challenges for Ukrainian students are the language barrier, cultural differences and emotional difficulties, especially in the initial period after arrival. However, with an individual approach, a flexible curriculum, language support, visual and game methods, school counseling and psychological assistance, as well as a favorable social atmosphere, most students demonstrate positive dynamics and achieve positive results.

The study revealed that family support is of particular importance in the adaptation process. The role of parents is manifested not only in motivating the child, but also in participating in the educational process, which strengthens the connection between school and home and contributes to the formation of sustainable learning behavior. The availability of clubs related to the native language and culture also has a positive effect, which helps to maintain the identity of students and strengthen their emotional well-being.

Despite individual differences in the speed and nature of adaptation, almost all students who participated in the research were able to find their place in the new educational environment. Some students were active and even took leadership positions in the class, which indicates a high integration potential in the presence of the necessary conditions.

Thus, the research goals were achieved, and all questions were answered reasonably. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of a specific case have significant practical value. They can be used in further development of integration strategies, as well as in the work of teachers, school administrators and migration policy specialists. In the future, it seems relevant to conduct longitudinal research to assess the sustainability of the achieved results and identify key factors of long-term integration in the conditions of the multilingual educational space of Estonia.

Footnotes and acknowledgments

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Wordless picture books trigger conversations at primary level of education

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Abstract
The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the methodology behind the forthcoming wordless picture book Monsterland and its accompanying methodological manual. Together these resources are designed to support the development of foreign language vocabulary and social-emotional skills in young learners aged six to eleven. The picture publication is divided into eleven teaching units that align with topics from the primary school curriculum. Each unit contains emotionally colored pictures representing selected vocabulary, which invite young learners to a spontaneous conversation between the teacher and the other learners using basic grammatical constructions. All the images and story examples were created by the young learners who will use the book. The publication also includes a six-language dictionary. The picture book together with the methodological manual presented in the form of sample lesson plans corresponding to each teaching unit will be piloted in selected primary schools. Observation and self-reflection tools, the structure and content of which are outlined in this paper, will be used for the evaluation of the project.

Keywords*: Monsterland, methodology, vocabulary, social-emotional development.*

Introduction

Using wordless picture books by parents with their children is a logical reaction to the fact that the children are not able to read and write properly at the early stages of their language development. This characteristic of child's natural development should be respected in primary schools by developing (very) young learners' speaking and listening skills communicating with the pictures and interpreting the situations they see. It means that young learners recognize people, animals and things in the picture based on their personal experience but they often have insufficient vocabulary to name them in the foreign language and sometimes cannot find the appropriate word in the mother tongue, as well. Goriot, Jongstra and Mensink (2024) carried out a systematic literature overview of peer reviewed articles written in English from 1998 to 2022 about the benefits and potential drawbacks of using wordless picture books for learner's development. The articles contain only empirical research done using wordless picture books in which the participants were not older than twelve years old. The authors finally collected 35 articles respecting these criteria of selection discovering some remarkable findings concerning language development and social-emotional skills.

Language development using wordless picture books

The fact that wordless picture books foster language development of young learners was confirmed in all 35 articles. It is not only connected to increased number of words in learner's vocabulary. It may reflect the situation when weaker learners are able to learn from their peers whose cognitive abilities are at a higher level (Lambert, 2015). In other words, the learner can be an observer of a language situation and absorb foreign words and grammatical structures by listening to the classmates. Hu et al. (2018) and Guichot-Muñoz et al. (2020) believe that wordless picture books are very useful tool for building up a positive relationship to reading as a skill and also free time activity. Young learners are active creators of the story, they decide about the sequence of events, about the twist in the story, about the tone of the story and about the ending of the story. In addition, they learn to formulate their preliminary ideas developing their speaking skills. These benefits of wordless picture books are also valid for the learners with special educational needs or for the learners with weaker communication competence, which makes them a universal teaching and learning aid. The absence of text enables the learners to fully concentrate on the meaning, plot, emotions of characters and overall atmosphere in the story. They prepare the learners for reading texts, which appear everywhere around them - at school and outside of school.

Arif & Hashim (2008) and Crawford & Hade (2000) state that wordless picture books may serve as an assessment tool in terms of literacy-related activities connected with all language skills and critical thinking. Consequently, the teacher can make interventions and it results in learner's language progress. Chaparro-Moreno et al. (2017) discovered that teachers' use of richer vocabulary working with wordless picture books was immediately reflected in learner's use of words, in comparison to picture books with the text where teachers use longer and more complicated sentences due to the explanation of written words into spoken language. Smadja et al. (2019) and Schick et al. (2021) confirm this fact in their research done with bilingual very young learners and twelve teachers. This research clearly demonstrates that teachers asked more questions, and very young learners were able to share their thoughts and were more willing to participate in the discussions and complete various tasks more using wordless picture books. The researchers use the term "co-constructive style" which describe a vivid communication between the learners and the teacher/parents (In Goriot, Jongstra and Mensink, 2024: 10, 11). These results are valid in a school environment as well as at home (ibid).

Communication which is provoked by wordless picture books is happening between the reader, young learner, and the picture while the coordinator who moves the communication forward is usually an adult. Communication is then a social interaction in which a level of emotions is manifested consciously or subconsciously through personality traits of participants involved.

Social-emotional development using wordless picture books

Mantei & Kervin (2015) agree that wordless picture books support language development of young learners adding a psycho-social dimension and open mindedness to other cultures as other areas developed by wordless picture books. A young learner needs to read wordless picture books with his peers and with adults. An adult should coordinate with the learner by giving him specific questions in terms of the plot, or they may together think aloud about the situations which require an explanation, or they can use a similar story to compare it with the actually interpreted one focusing on the development of social-emotional skills. An adult can let the learner take the position of the leader in the discussion and the adult can observe and coordinate learner's ideas (Wiseman, 2011). Furthermore, young learners may develop empathy and self and social awareness, or improve and even challenge moral and ethical aspects of the topics presented so they shape their inner values (Lysaker & Miller, 2013; Nikolajeva, 2014).

On the other hand, Schoroškienė (2022) recommends reading picture books with text (we would suggest also wordless picture books) using toys, calling it play-based pedagogy in her research carried out with young learners under the age of nine. Except for promoting learner's language development (the author states some sayings or expressions used rarely in active communication), she mentioned that the combination of picture books with printed text and toys helped "to notice and understand the peculiarities of the expression of the picture book" (ibid, p. 98). The author found out that the toy helped to explain some situations not clear for young learners, which may have an impact on learner's social-emotional and human development. She introduced the following example of seven-year-old learner: "For instance, by simulating a ride with a small toy bicycle, the child understood why the hair of the boy on the bicycle was blowing. The teacher discussed with the student how the artist conveyed speed in the drawing and how speed was related to the character's mood" (ibid, p. 99). What is more, she highlights that when using a toy, young learners had better understand the connection between the written text in the picture book and a real life. However, the author admits that using a toy and a picture book at the same time may distract learner's attention because the learners do not know what to focus on - on a toy or on the pictures in the picture book (ibid).

Based on the selected studies from 1998 to 2022, Goriot, Jongstra and Mensink (2024) believe that the aim of the future researches should be to explore concrete benefits of wordless picture books over the picture books with text and vice versa. They suggest that the research can be done with older participants. So far they have found just one study from 2004 conducted by Fiestas & Peña focused on this aim. This research proved the benefits of using wordless picture books in terms of creating a more colorful language environment introduced by the adults, which contributes to learner's language development in the future.

Taking into consideration all the above stated research and also our own findings concerning this area (2020-2025)[1], we decided to prepare own project under the contract No. 006UKF-4/2024 financially supported by Cultural and Educational Grant Agency (KEGA) which is categorized as the applied research. Its title is Developing Young Learners' Vocabulary and Their Social-Emotional Skills Using Picture Books in English Lessons.

Methodology - the main aim of the project and layout of the wordless picture book Monsterland

The aim of the project was to design supplementary teaching material - a wordless picture book and methodological manual for creative work with this wordless picture book called Monsterland with the aim to develop vocabulary and social-emotional skills in English lessons of young learners' aged six-eleven. Respecting primary school curriculum, the project team developed eleven teaching units with the corresponding vocabulary (each unit contains a selected number of words).

The first unit is dedicated to the introductory session during which the learners become familiar with the main protagonists, monsters, in the wordless picture book. The next units are organized according to the selected topics: family, school, furniture, animals, fruit and vegetable, free time, transport, town and country, seasons and weather and clothing. At the beginning of each unit we used a circle of pictures where we put all key vocabulary related to that particular unit in order to divide one topic from another one. In simple words, if a child sees a circle full of pictures, it is a signal for him that a new teaching unit starts. At the end of each unit, there is an orange-yellow rectangle or so called "the golden frame" in which the learners can draw something personal connected to that particular unit. For instance, their favorite fruit in the basket, their favorite room/piece of furniture in the house or they can glue there a photo of their family. At the end of Monsterland, young learners may find several pictures drawn as the stories. The teacher can encourage the learners to come up with their own story being as creative as possible.

The final section of wordless picture books contains a multilingual dictionary that comprises the overview of all words, which young learners should acquire in each teaching unit. It consists of Slovak language, which is the state language of the project team members, then there is English which is taught at school as the first compulsory foreign language in Slovakia. The languages such as German, Spanish, French and Italian are also included in the dictionary as other foreign languages taught in primary schools. As a result, Monsterland can be used to teach vocabulary of any language because the main element to work with are pictures and not the text. We include the following link with the picture book publication Monsterland and its methodological manual which are scheduled to be printed in October 2025: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17GLifsIowktJG4TQzplxIwkSpvxVMwq_

Process of drawing the pictures in Monsterland

All pictures used in Monsterland were drawn by young learners (mostly in the 3rd and 4th grade) in primary schools in Slovakia. Since the aim of the project was to develop vocabulary and social-emotional

[1] Except professional articles, in 2022 I created the Slovak alphabet book in which each picture hides one letter of the Slovak alphabet whereas the name of the picture itself starts with the same hidden letter. The shape of the letter is highlighted in green color if the user moves a mouse cursor on the picture, e.g. a lemon in Slovak is "citrón" and the picture of this fruit is shaping the letter C.

skills, we asked the teachers to instruct their learners to draw the pictures, which are emotionally loaded and colorful, and if possible they will act accordingly. For example, if the topic is "school", the project team selected the words such as a book, a pen, a pencil, a pencil case, a school bag, a desk, a blackboard, a rubber, a teacher. As a result, we received the pictures of an open, happy book, a sleeping purple school bag, a smiling red-blue pen, a blackboard with double emotions: the right hand side is unhappy and the left hand side is smiling, a green and yellow happy pencil case with pens, pencils, and eraser inside, and also the picture of a teacher who is teaching the group of learners representing by the curious small active animals sitting at their desks.

Respecting the main protagonists, monster girl and monster boy, we asked learners in the 3rd and 4th grade in two selected primary schools to draw them under the supervision of their teachers. The instructions of the project team were as follows: the size of the picture where the protagonist will be drawn should be A5, monster girl should have big eyes, long legs, four short hands, thick long hair, a freckled long nose, two pairs of ears, narrow eyebrows, a big mouth with gaps among teeth and sharp chin. She should be wearing a big hat with a decoration, T-shirt with flowers, short flounced skirt and sandals with another decoration. The instructions for the monster boy were similar. The teachers who were supervisors for drawing protagonists added their own suggestions for improvement of these monsters; for example, the monster girl should be wearing a short dress with a belt, tights with holes and butterfly's wings. Young learners also modified the monster a little bit; for instance, the monster girl was wearing a ribbon in her hair and had a bat's wings instead of a butterfly's. The teachers suggested a few optional accessories such as rings, bracelets or scarf. Regarding the emotions, young learners preferred laughter, fear, sorrow, surprise, enthusiasm, anger, or madness. The project team was consequently responsible for the selection of pictures, which fulfilled their expectations the best, whereas the teachers of two selected primary schools responsible for drawing the main protagonists were involved in the decision process, too. All in all, we received around 400 drawings of monsters and other unique pictures. The teachers during the process of drawing the main protagonists emphasized that the learners revise the vocabulary considering body parts, plural nouns and demonstrative pronouns "this" and "these" by improving the work in pairs.

A few remarks to methodological manual

As we mentioned above, Monsterland is suitable for any language. Due to the fact that the book was developed by a Slovak project team, we decided to use Slovak language as the language of the methodological manual with examples of a foreign language, specifically English, in the sample lesson plans because it is the first foreign language taught in Slovak schools. The manual consists of eleven lessons plans written as a working document for the teacher, which means that the teacher can freely modify them. The heading of each lesson plan is structured in the same way containing the title of teaching unit, the basic and additional vocabulary, basic communication structures (for example: I like ... This is ... What color is it?), specific social and emotional skills developed during the lessons and teaching aids. Each lesson plan is divided into 3 lessons with the exception of the very first lesson plan in which the learners are becoming familiar with the main protagonists and their role in Monsterland. These 3 lessons for each teaching unit consists of the introductory "encounter" with the main and additional vocabulary, then the teacher starts to work with the social and emotional skills of young learners in the form of interactive activities such as total physical response, competition, karaoke, singing songs, drama activities, drawing, movement-based activities, showing or guessing combined with activities promoting repetition and imitation, or describing visual materials.

The manual is based on the audio-lingual approach. It means that young learners practice their listening and speaking skills. There are no tasks for writing or reading. There is no time limit for the suggested activities because the working tempo of the learners can be very individual depending on their level of English language proficiency and their mental maturity. The same pictures used in Monsterland are also available online as flashcards so the teacher can use them whenever he needs.

Monsterland together with its methodological manual will be piloted at primary schools who became the participants in the project. The project team will welcome possible modifications and suggestions for improvement in both publications.

Suggestions for the structure and content of the research tools

During piloting, the project team is planning to use two self-reflection tools for the teacher and one summative assessment of the Monsterland for the teacher.

Regarding the first self-reflection tool, the teacher should focus on the first subtopic - the way the introductory presentation of the topic is happening. The topic may be presented meaningfully and playfully, it can be connected to real life of the learners, and/or the teacher may activate prior knowledge of the learners. Then, the teacher concentrates on the second subtopic - development of learner's vocabulary through the pictures. The teacher can follow the pictures of people, animals and things naming them. He can reinforce the vocabulary through the repetition and questions. He can use new words in context (in sentences and/or in stories), and/or he supports the learners to create their own sentences. Considering the third subtopic - the development of social-emotional skills, the teacher can choose from the following options: the teacher helps the learners to identify different emotions of people, animals and things; he supports the feeling of empathy leading the learners to imagine how they would feel in that situation; he lets the learners share their feelings, and/or he highlights moral and ethical aspects within the topic. The fourth subtopic can be focused on the overall clarity of instructions and their appropriateness for the age level.

The second self-reflection tool is related to learner's reactions with the Monsterland. The teacher should notice if the learners acquire the new words easily and they use them correctly, if the learners asked for more repetition, and/or the words were difficult for them and they had a problem remembering them. Then, the teacher focuses on whether learners were able to identify the emotions and discuss them, if they needed more time to identify the emotions, and/or the learners were not able to identify the emotions, and, if possible, the teacher comments on the possible reasons of this inability. Lastly, the teacher comments on the cooperation and communication having these options: the learners collaborate together and they were listening to each other, the collaboration among learners was coordinated by the teacher, and/or a conflict appeared and the teacher made an intervention.

Summative assessment deals with the overall satisfaction with the Monsterland and methodological manual. It will be written for the English primary teacher in the first person singular as follows: how did I present the topic to the learners using Monsterland? (was I able to catch learner's attention?), how did I support a creative usage of vocabulary using Monsterland?, how did I develop social-emotional skills using Monsterland? (had the learners enough space to introduce their own experiences?), what would I like to improve the next lesson? (e.g. the formulation of questions, more interest in learner's emotions, let the learners use new words more creatively, ...).

Conclusion

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the methodology behind the forthcoming wordless picture book Monsterland and its accompanying methodological manual, which develop foreign language vocabulary and social-emotional skills of young learners from the age of six to eleven.

The significant theoretical basis for elaborating this paper was a literature review of Goriot, Jongstra and Mensink (2024) who systematically sum up the benefits and potential disadvantages of using wordless picture books for learner's development in the last 24 years. The articles contained only empirical research related to wordless picture books in which the participants were not older than twelve years old. This literature review and other articles used in this paper confirm the benefits of using wordless picture books in the field of language development. For example, young learners learn to formulate their preliminary ideas developing their speaking skills; teachers use richer vocabulary working with wordless picture books in comparison to picture books with text where teachers use longer and more complicated sentences; they also use specific questions related to the plot or the twist in the story. In the field of social-emotional development, there are other advantages; for instance, open mindedness to other cultures, developing of empathy, self and social awareness, ethical and moral values and peer learning.

Monsterland is a unique publication, which contains the drawings made by young learners on eleven topics chosen by the members of the project team respecting the curriculum for primary learners in terms of foreign language. Monsterland contains a space for personalization. There is also a six-language dictionary including the state Slovak language of basic and additional vocabulary for parents to check the number and content of words acquired by their children within one unit. However, Monsterland is possible to use with any language because the pictures, not the text, makes this wordless picture book widely applicable. The project team included three lesson plans in the methodological manual for each teaching unit giving inspiring tips for the activities for the English primary teacher such as total physical response, competition, karaoke, singing songs, drama activities, drawing, movement-based activities, showing or guessing combined with the activities promoting repetition and imitation, or describing visual materials. The aim of the self-reflection tools is to monitor teacher's work with Monsterland and learners' reactions to teacher's instructions accompanied by overall summative assessment of the Monsterland. These three research tools are interconnected in terms of structure and content as well.

We strongly believe that we as the project team developed useful and helpful publications for larger number of users - children, parents and teachers speaking various languages. We hope that these publications may become even of a higher quality after the piloting stage with the possible refinements of strategies and procedures suggested from the English primary teachers and the learners.

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The role of semantic attunement in bilingualism and second language learning

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Abstract
Different languages include different information about the events they describe in their verbs. When learning their native language, children come to attend specifically to the information that its verbs describe, a process called semantic attunement (Golinkoff et al., 2025). Those who learn a second language as an adult often continue to follow these attentional biases when they speak and write (e.g., Song et al., 2016), resulting in utterances that do not conform to the language being learned (the L2). Lucy (2004) called this effect semantic accent. Many questions remain about semantic attunement, especially in the realm of bilingualism. In particular, it is possible that second-language education ought to include direct instruction about the semantic biases of the target language. Doing so may help students produce more native-sounding language sooner in their training. Apparently, such comparative instruction is not presently offered – at least at the college level.

Keywords: *semantic attunement, language development, bilingualism, second language instruction, second language learning*

Introduction

Imagine a scene of a person walking across a road. Depending on which language the viewer speaks, describing this scene could focus on any of its *components:* the person (figure), the way they move (manner), the road (ground), the direction they take (path), or even others. For example, while an English speaker may say "She walks across the street," a Spanish speaker describing the same event may say "Ella cruzó la calle caminando" ("She crossed the street walking"). These languages encode different event components in the verb: English uses the verb to describe *manner* information (how an action is performed), while Spanish is more likely to use the verb to describe *path* information, or the trajectory of the action. In each language, other information can be encoded in different parts of the sentence, such as with prepositions or adverbial phrases, but only the information in the verb is *required* for the sentence. In this way, different languages spotlight different event components. Characterized by Talmy (1985), the event components a language highlights is its *event typology.*

Learning which event components are required and which are not is an important part of learning a language. Children start life attending to a wide variety of event components, but as they gain experience with their first language, they begin to focus only on the components which their language spotlights (Göksun et al., 2011). Using an eye-tracking paradigm, Göksun et al. (2011) tested whether English- and Japanese-reared infants would notice the difference between a *bounded* ground (e.g., a street or bridge) and an *unbounded* ground (e.g., a field or a golf course). Japanese uses different verbs to describe each of these categories, but English does not. Silent videos of dynamic events were shown to both groups of infants. After being habituated to events involving one ground type, 14-month-old infants in both language groups showed a novelty preference for the other ground type, showing that they were able to hone in on the difference in ground type between the categories. At 19 months, however, only Japanese-reared infants maintained sensitivity to this distinction. The finding that Japanese-reared infants, but not

English-reared infants, were still able to notice the distinction between the ground types at 19 months of age suggests that their language experience influenced the event components to which they attended.

Further support for the role of language in this process comes from an eye-tracking study working with English-speaking infants. Konishi et al. (2019) examined whether introducing new words could manipulate the event components to which infants attend. Using the same videos and overall procedure as Göksun et al. (2011), Konishi et al. (2019) found that 14-month-old English-reared infants could be induced to no longer attend to the distinction between ground-path categories when both categories were described with the same nonsense preposition (e.g., *She's walking toke the road!*). However, 23-month-old English-reared children, could be induced to notice the distinction again if different prepositions were used to differentiate between them. Notably, it only took a few minutes of exposure to these novel category labels for the children to "rediscover" the distinction (Konishi et al., 2019). Preliminary research suggests, however, that it is much more difficult for adults to notice event components their language does not highlight in this way (Konishi et al., 2019). This process, called *semantic attunement* (Golinkoff et al., 2025), is somewhat analogous to attunement previously observed in other domains, such as phonology (e.g., Tsao et al., 2004), face perception (see Scherf & Scott, 2012), and music perception (Hannon & Trehub, 2005). In both processes, infants gradually learn what kinds of distinction are important to their language, and allocate their attention accordingly. In this way, they become more in tune with their native language, and begin to perform more like adult native speakers. In the case of semantic attunement, this means that infants begin to focus their attention from a wide range of event components to just the ones that their language encodes in the verb, as shown in Göksun et al. (2011).

Thus far, the majority of the research on how and when semantic attunement occurs has focused on monolingually-reared infants. In other domains, such as phonology, bilingually-reared infants have been shown to follow a more complex developmental trajectory, thought to be due to needing to "sort through" varying input from multiple languages (e.g., see Bosch & Sebastián-Gallés, 2003). Many questions remain about semantic attunement, especially in (both native and non-native) bilingual populations.

The current paper aims to discuss how semantic attunement can be applied to second language acquisition in and out of educational settings. Semantic attunement as a framework has only very recently begun to be explored (see Golinkoff et al., 2025), and more research is needed to consider its potential implications for second language acquisition and pedagogy. Looking through the lens of semantic attunement may produce interesting new questions for further research. This paper will highlight gaps in the research to which semantic attunement might be profitably applied.

Bilingual development

The bilingual advantage. Infants being reared in a bilingual environment seem to develop differently from their monolingual peers in various cognitive domains (for a review, see Barac & Bialystok, 2011). For example, previous research has found that bilinguals outperform their monolingual peers in measures of executive function, especially in the domain of inhibitory control (Bialystok, 2009; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008; Miyake et al., 2000). Besides the "bilingual advantage" seen in certain domains of executive function (e.g., Bialystok et al., 2003), cross-linguistic coactivation of language structures in the bilingual brain may affect visual attention, semantic organization, and memory (Marian & Hayakawa, 2025). For example, one study on visual attention found that *monolingual* Spanish and Catalan-reared infants who were habituated to a silent video of a person speaking French or English were not able to detect when the speaker switched languages, but Spanish-Catalan bilingual infants were (Sebastián-Gallés et al., 2012). Even without sound, the bilingually-reared infants noticed when the speaker switched languages because of visual cues such as the way the mouth moved; monolingual infants did not notice the switch. Even when monolingual French- or English-reared infants viewed the same videos, they were not able to detect the swap, while French-English bilingually-reared infants did (Sebastián-Gallés et al., 2012). This finding suggests that bilingual infants are able to pay closer attention to visual information, as they were able to notice such a small change.

Further supporting a bilingual advantage with visual attention, Singh et al. (2015) found that infants 6 months of age who were being raised bilingually habituated to visual stimuli more quickly than their monolingual peers. Examining whether bilingualism conveys an advantage in visual attention and memory, Singh et al. (2015) habituated each participant to either a stuffed bear or a stuffed wolf, which were very visually similar. From habituation trial to habituation trial, bilingual infants showed a steeper decrease in visual fixation time, indicating that they were becoming habituated to the stimulus faster than their monolingual peers. After habituation, participants were shown both stuffed animals side-by-side. While both monolingual and bilingual infants preferred to look at the stuffed animal they had *not* seen during habituation, indicating that they were able to tell the difference, bilingual infants looked at the novel stimulus significantly longer (Singh et al., 2015). These results suggest a measurable bilingual advantage in even nonlinguistic (i.e., visual) information processing, as well as in visual memory.

Early bilingualism and attunement. One consequence of the interaction between bilingualism and cognitive development can be seen in the timeline along which bilingually-reared children undergo attunement processes. Previously, bilingual rearing has been thought to *delay* language learning, as bilingually-reared children seemed to lag behind their monolingual peers in word learning and phonological development (see Fennell & Lew-Williams, 2017). Generally, however, studies that found such a “bilingual disadvantage” focused only on one of the child’s languages, and thus did not produce an accurate picture of their actual word learning (Fennell & Lew-Williams, 2017). More recent studies have produced a more nuanced picture, in which bilingually-reared children are presented with unique challenges that *can* result in a longer period of phonological attunement. However, this effect is strongest when the two languages are very similar, and thus harder to tease apart (Bosch & Sebastián-Gallés, 2003; Sebastián-Gallés & Bosch, 2009; Petitto et al., 2012; Garcia-Sierra et al., 2011). It has also been posited that bilingually-reared children may remain more flexible for a longer time than their monolingual peers with regard to learning non-native contrasts from a third language (Graf Estes & Hay, 2015 vs. Hay et al., 2015; Singh, 2018 vs. May & Werker, 2014). In other words, bilingually-reared children may be more easily able to “recapture” attention to phonemes that their languages do not have than their monolingual counterparts. It is unclear how long this additional cognitive flexibility may last, however, and more research is needed to fully characterize the relationship between early bilingualism and phonological attunement.

Given the evidence that bilingually-reared children undergo a more complex (and potentially lengthier) trajectory when it comes to phonological attunement, it stands to reason that they may also experience similar complications in the domain of semantic attunement. Using the same paradigm as Göksun et al. (2011) and Konishi et al. (2019), Singh et al. (2023) compared Mandarin-English bilingual infants to their monolingual peers (all from Singapore). In this study, infants were habituated to one type of ground-crossing event, showing either a bounded or unbounded ground. At test, a split-screen display with one crossing event on the novel ground type and one of the familiar ground were shown. Eye tracking was used to evaluate whether infants preferred the novel ground type, which would indicate that they had successfully formed categories of events based on this non-native distinction. The bilingually-reared infants were found to develop sensitivity to changes in ground type, which is not lexicalized in either of their ambient languages, later than monolingually-reared infants; however, they also retained their sensitivity to it for longer. At 14 months of age, the monolingually-reared infants were sensitive to the non-native ground-path distinction, but this sensitivity declined by 19 months. The bilingually-reared infants, in contrast, did not show sensitivity to this distinction at 14 months, but *were* able to notice it at 19 months. By 24 months, the bilingually-reared infants once again declined in sensitivity to the non-native distinction. Interestingly, and unlike the monolingual infants, the bilingual infants also showed more attention *within* ground types. This developmental trajectory described by Singh et al. (2023)

mirrors similar findings in the phonological domain (see Singh et al., 2018). It is possible that, because bilingually-reared infants are exposed to input from multiple languages, it may take longer for them to hone in on the event components their languages privilege.

It remains to be seen whether and how bilingually-reared children differ from their monolingual peers in terms of semantic attunement in the long term. It is likely that their developmental trajectories in this domain are more complex, and they may even retain more flexibility later in life, mirroring findings in the phonological domain. Much more research is needed to understand how growing up in a bilingual environment may affect infants' semantic attunement.

Acquiring an L2 as an adult: thinking for speaking and semantic accents

Non-native speakers - that is, those who acquire an L2 in adulthood - rarely show native-like performance in their target language, even after years of instruction or even after living in a country where their target language is routinely spoken (Bley-Vroman, 1988; Johnson & Newport, 1989). The acquisition of a native language comes along with the attentional biases associated with it. Therefore, it appears to be very difficult to be "retrained" (Slobin, 1996, 91). Adult L2 learners are therefore faced not only with learning the vocabulary and grammar of their new language, but also with learning its event typology. This is an exceptionally difficult task, which may partially underlie an adult L2 speaker's inability to reach native-like performance.

Thinking for speaking. Slobin (1987) proposed the term *thinking for speaking,* referring to the way that planning an utterance affects how a speaker organizes their thoughts. The idea that one's thoughts are influenced by whether they are planning to speak is intuitively true, but is also supported by research. An eye tracking study on visual attention, for example, found that English and Greek speakers attended to different event components of an animated event when they were told they would need to describe it later, but not otherwise (Papafragou et al., 2008). When shown animated scenes, English speakers looked longer at areas of the screen associated with manner information, and Greek speakers looked longer at areas of the screen associated with path information. Further supporting the specific role of language, the effect disappeared under linguistic interference (i.e., while counting aloud), but not under non-linguistic interference (i.e., a tapping task) (Trueswell & Papafragou, 2010). This suggests that cognitive systems related to language were being used to process the visual scene when it was available under non-linguistic interference. Since the differences between language groups disappeared under linguistic interference, it is unlikely that the effect stemmed from a more general effect of culture or previous experience with looking in general. Rather, it seemed to come from the specific event components each language used in their verbs.

Semantic accent. Planning an utterance in a learner's second language is a complicated task, which can be affected by the native language, producing grammatically sound sentences that still sound strange to a native ear. Lucy (2004, 2010) called this a *semantic accent,* drawing an analogy to phonological accents. These "strange" sentences can take several forms. In one example, Potapova and Boroditsky (2016) found that fluent Russian speakers often include information about events that would be required in Russian but not English in their English utterances. For example, many Russian speakers were found to include telicity information, which English does not require. Second-language speakers might also use words that translate literally between their L1 and L2, but carry different features or connotations, an effect mediated by experience with their L2 (Matsuki et al., 2020). For example, as described in Matsuki et al. (2020), the word "pumpkin" in English is translated as *kabocha* in Japanese, but the actual objects the words refer to differ significantly between cultures. In the U.S., pumpkins are round and orange; in Japan, however, most are green. Even given experience not just with the language but also with the culture and surrounding flora, a native Japanese speaker may display a semantic accent by referring to a green vegetable as a pumpkin. Even when grammatical fluency is reached, a semantic accent may remain, resulting in clearly non-native utterances.

Advanced L2 learners. Although adult L2 learners may never reach fully native proficiency, there is a small amount of research on adult L2 learners' ability to learn and adopt their new language's event typology. One study asked native Danish speakers who were learning Spanish to narrate motion events in Danish or Spanish. Advanced Spanish learners produced narrations that mirrored native Spanish speakers both in terms of the information included and the grammatical structures that were used (Cadierno, 2004). A subsequent study found that Danish speakers who were advanced Spanish learners did not differ from native Spanish speakers in their use of manner verbs (Cadierno & Ruiz, 2006). These findings are a testament to what we know: humans can learn new languages, even well into adulthood. Similarly, a study on native Chinese speakers learning English showed that the adult participants could reach a native-like level of sensitivity to and production of English plurals (Li, 2021).

This does not mean that the task of acquiring a new language in adulthood is easy, however. The literature is not clear on how many adult L2 learners are able to reach native-like proficiency, if any at all (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000). Generally, language learners who begin in adulthood are much less likely to reach native-like proficiency in their L2, even given years of practice and immersion. Adult L2 learners often are, however, able to communicate in their second language, even if their performance is clearly non-native (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000).

Mastering an L2 requires much practice and exposure. L2 learners with less experience with the new language do seem to rely on their L1 more when producing sentences in their L2. Even at the advanced level, Cadierno (2004) found that Danish speakers learning Spanish often provided more elaborate and complex path information than native Spanish speakers; similarly, Cadierno and Ruiz (2006) found that the Danish speakers used manner verbs inaccurately to describe boundary crossing events in a way that native Spanish speakers did not. Additionally, Inagaki (2001) showed that native Japanese speakers learning English failed to accurately comprehend combinations of manner verbs with locational prepositional phrases (e.g., "John swam under the bridge"), which are not allowed in Japanese. This mismatch also runs in reverse; native English speakers learning Japanese accepted similar constructions in Japanese as grammatical even though they are not (Inagaki, 2001).

Seeking to study how L2 learners may avoid their new language's event typology, Song et al. (2016) provided adult native English-speakers learning Spanish with a wordless picture book and asked them to write descriptions of four pictures. The proportion of path verbs the participants used was measured, and compared to native Spanish speakers. The English-speakers ranged from an intermediate to advanced level in Spanish. When describing an image of an owl, intermediate Spanish learners produced sentences using manner verbs to describe boundary-crossing events that native speakers describe with path verbs. For example, an intermediate Spanish learner produced *El búho vuela fuera del árbol* [translating "The owl flew out of the tree"], which makes use of a manner verb with the path described in a prepositional phrase. Describing the same image, a native Spanish speaker produced *Salió un búho,* ['An owl exited'] which omits the manner entirely and encodes the path in the verb. Overall, the L2 learners used of *volar* "to fly" 7 times when describing the image of the owl, while the native Spanish speakers did not reference the manner of the owl's action at all (Song et al., 2016). These data suggest that the intermediate Spanish learners were relying on their English experience to describe the event and attempting to directly translate English descriptions into Spanish, rather than describing images in the way a native Spanish speaker would. This effect of English event framing on Spanish sentences was mediated by both the level of the Spanish class the learner had taken and their amount of study abroad (i.e., immersion) experience (Song et al., 2016).

Another study examining Japanese-English bilinguals found a similar mediating effect of experience and especially cultural immersion on the degree of semantic accent L2 learners exhibited (Matsuki et al., 2020). In this study, native Japanese speakers who spoke English as an L2 were recruited from Japan and Canada. The participants living in Canada, where they are much more immersed in Western culture, were compared to the ones living in Japan. In both languages, across two sessions, participants performed a series of tasks investigating which features they associated with various nouns. Working with tokens like the pumpkin-*kabocha* example, wherein a word that translates between languages actually refers to objects with very different features, Matsuki et al. (2020) examined whether native Japanese speakers associated more Japanese-like features (i.e., for "pumpkin," green skin) with each token, even when presented in English. They found that the participants living in Canada, where they were much more immersed in Western culture, were significantly less likely to associate Japanese-like features with tokens presented in English than their Japan-dwelling counterparts. While both groups of participants behaved similarly on tests presented in Japanese, the participants living in Tokyo associated more Japanese-like features with English tokens, indicating a semantic accent. The participants living in Canada, despite being native Japanese speakers, are more immersed in Western culture than those living in Japan; Matsuki et al. (2020) posits that this immersion mediated the effect of their native language on their feature decisions.

Generally speaking, second-language textbooks do not include explicit instruction about lexicalization biases and event typology (Cubillos, 2019, personal communication). Therefore, students must discover these biases on their own, and only then can they incorporate them into their own utterances. This could be done by statistical learning, or by extrapolating from specific rules disallowing certain structures in the L2 (e.g., manner verb/locational PP in Japanese, or a manner verb describing a boundary-crossing event in Spanish). More research is needed to understand how adult language learners acquire and incorporate lexicalization biases from their L2. It is possible that explicit instruction on event typology could help language learners begin to use more native-like structures earlier. For example, in the case of English and Spanish, it may be helpful for an instructor to draw specific attention to event components by presenting images similar to the ones used in Song et al. (2016) and asking students to identify which component(s) their L2 versus their native language focuses on. Students could then be asked to provide written descriptions of these images to see if this exercise affected their semantic accent. Given that adults can engage their metalinguistic awareness, it may be the case that engaging in explicit comparisons like these would highlight the differences between languages and the appropriate encodings in the L2. Additional research of this nature could help determine whether and how semantic attunement should be taken into account in the language classroom.

Future directions

Semantic attunement is still a relatively new avenue of research, and much more is needed to understand a) the process by which it occurs, b) the ways it may interact with bilingualism in children, and c) how adult learners of second languages overcome the event typology they are used to in their native language to acquire those demanded by their L2. As highlighted in Singh et al. (2022), the available research on attunement in the phonological domain lacks diversity. While the effects of phonological attunement are well-supported in the populations studied, a systematic review of the literature showed that the populations studied were a) largely monolingual (despite this not being a global norm), b) not from a diverse geographical location, and c) examining a relatively small subset of phonological contrasts (Singh et al., 2022). A lack of diversity in the research thus far undermines claims of the "universality" of phonological attunement. Since semantic attunement is roughly analogous, this limitation must also be taken into account when researching semantic attunement. Future research in this area should aim to recruit diverse groups of participants from a wide variety of language backgrounds so as to build a more complete understanding.

While there is a dearth of research into semantic attunement overall (Golinkoff et al., 2025), there is almost none available that examines bilingual participants. Just as the differences between bi- and monolingual learners can teach us more about phonological attunement, the same is true for semantic attunement. Much more research is needed comparing bilingually-reared infants to their monolingual peers, including utilizing different event component distinctions. For example, are some event components more salient than others, even when the participant does not speak a language that lexicalizes them? Do bilingually-reared children remain more sensitive to changes in non-native event component distinctions longer into childhood than their monolingual counterparts? Does it matter if a bilingually-reared infant's ambient languages have similar or more different event typologies? These questions and more remain open.

It is also possible that research into semantic attunement may result in new guidance for second language teachers. Most second language education programs focus on syntactic and phonological aspects of the target language. However, these are not the only aspects by which languages differ. The semantic tendencies of the target language should also be taken into account when teaching a second language (Golinkoff et al., 2025). It is currently unclear whether and how explicit instruction on verb framing might affect semantic accents in second-language learners. Research is needed in order to determine what the best approach to teaching a language's event typology might be. More research is also required to establish whether students learning languages besides Spanish, or with first languages besides English, show semantic accents similar to what was found in Song et al. (2016). Matsuki et al. (2020) found that the strength of a semantic accent is mediated by experience and degree of immersion in the target language, but it remains to be seen whether direct instruction about event typology could also play a role. Finally, it is unclear whether the strength of a semantic accent correlates with other measures of language proficiency.

Semantic attunement, and semantic accents, present complex challenges when learning a new language, whether as a child or an adult. Much about the process remains unknown. Further research is required to understand the process of semantic attunement, whether and how it interacts with bilingualism, and whether and how it ought to be incorporated into a second language learning environment. Currently, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to draw from in response to these questions. Future research into second language acquisition pedagogy ought to take this new framework into account in order to address these knowledge gaps.

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Music and children's speech development

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Abstract
The topic of this paper is the influence of music on the development of children's speech. The paper synthesizes research results regarding how music influences the development of speech and language acquisition in children, and it also provides an overview of other authors' research and ideas that emphasize the significance of musical genres designed for younger children (such as children's songs, singing games, sung and spoken rhymes, music listening games, and movement activities with music) in fostering speech and language development. Intensive speech development and language acquisition occur during the first three years of a child's life. Engaging children in musical activities is the most natural way to develop speech through music. Simple songs for children, singing games, and sung and spoken rhymes can be used to conduct musical activities with younger children. Simultaneously, engaging in games while listening to music and incorporating movement with music are ideal methods for conducting music-related activities. By singing and listening to music, we teach children to distinguish between colors and pitches and develop their sense of intonation, rhythm, meter, tempo, and dynamics, essential for speech development and language acquisition. In addition to primarily supporting the development of musical abilities, musical activities also foster the development of numerous other abilities and the acquisition of various skills, including speech development. Also, musical activities influence a child's emotional connection with the adults who organize the activities above.

Keywords: *children's speech development, singing, sung and spoken rhymes, listening to music, movement with music*

Introduction – the influence of music

Music plays a significant role in a child's development, as it not only fosters the development of musical ability but also enhances speech, language acquisition, literacy development, memory, attention, self-esteem, cooperation willingness, social skills, creativity, self-expression, spatial orientation, responsibility, organization and planning, empathy, and emotion processing (Hallam, 2010). Research has shown a connection between musical engagement and improved cognitive function, although it is important to note that these are often correlational studies that imply association, not necessarily causation. Hanna-Pladdy and Gajewski (2012) researched to determine that at least ten years of playing an instrument affects cognitive functions. Specifically, they found that musicians exhibit superior non-verbal memory, can quickly identify objects, and can work longer than non-musicians. Mansens et al. (2018) obtained similar results, finding that playing music at least once every two weeks is associated with better attention and memory. Devroop's (2012) research revealed that playing music positively impacts self-esteem, optimism, happiness, and perseverance. Costa-Giomi (2004) conducted a study on the effects of three years of piano lessons, which showed that playing affects children's self-confidence. Hudziak et al. (2014) found that playing changes motor skills and improves memory, attention, organization, planning, and emotional processing. These results suggest that musical experience has a lasting and broad impact on brain development and cognitive abilities. Additionally, Schlaug et al. (2005) note that learning music leads to lasting improvements in children's visual-spatial, language, and math skills, but more long-term studies with controlled conditions are necessary to prove direct cause-and-effect links. Musical activities also significantly affect socio-emotional development, encouraging prosocial behavior and social skills. Numerous authors (Rabinowitch et al. 2013; Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Harland et al., 2000) have found in their research that children who engage in music are more willing to cooperate, help each other more in group problem-solving, i.e., they are more empathetic than children without musical education, have an increased awareness of the needs of others, better social skills, greater self-confidence, and that they express themselves more quickly and are more successful in group work. Forrai (1997) conducted a three-year longitudinal study comparing children aged six months to three years who had more or less exposure to music. The group with more musical activities improved over the other group on several variables, including initiating social contact. In her study, Jenlink (1993) concluded that school musical activities reduced adolescents' feelings of alienation, encouraged individual development, and provided better connections between the family and school. Ebie (1998) found that participating in a musical ensemble gives students a sense of personal accomplishment and gives them a sense of leadership and responsibility. Hallam (2010) also points out that music activity can improve children's self-confidence. However, only if the child has positive experiences during learning does music activity must be enjoyable and in line with the child's abilities. Teaching should create an environment that is flexible enough to support the development of creativity and self-expression. Musical activities also affect young children's emotional connections with the adults who organize them. Namely, music and dance movements in pairs or groups stimulate positive emotions among children and connections with adults because they create a positive atmosphere (Suleman et al., 2019).

The influence of music on children's speech development and language acquisition

Speech is a human sound communication shaped by the rhythm of sentences, words, and syllables (Škarić, 1986). It allows people to express their knowledge, feelings, needs, and opinions (Starc et al., 2004). Language is interpreted as a system of abstract signs realized through speech (Pavličević-Franić, 2008). Intensive speech development and language acquisition take place during the first three years of a child's life (Kovačević, 1996), i.e., speech development can be followed from birth to the appearance of the first meaningful word (preverbal period) and from the appearance of the first meaningful word (sentence) to the automation of speech (verbal period) (Starc et al., 2004). During this period, the child acquires the elements of speech, which are intonation, sentence melody, emphasis, tone color, rhythmic structures, voice nuances, loudness, tempo, and gestures (Patzalaff et al., 2012). Children use their bodies to pronounce more complex words between the ages of two and three. Between the ages of three and five, children transmit their experience of sound and voice, which involves repeating what they have heard, pronouncing consonants and vowels, connecting them, and practicing technique and speech. Children need a stimulating environment to develop speech and language acquisition, and speech disorders occur if it is not there. Therefore, adults should encourage children to develop speech and acquire language (Velički & Katarinčić, 2011). The most natural way to develop speech is achieved precisely through the use of music. According to McMullen and Saffran (2004), the organization of language and music is similar, with the phoneme serving as the basis for language and the tone as the basis for music. From the above, the child's brain undergoes the same cognitive processes during the development of speech and language acquisition, just as it does during the development of musical ability and the acquisition of musical skills. Ludke and Weinmann (2012) also underscore the significance of music in the early stages of language learning and acquisition, highlighting the close relationship between music and language because language and music learning occur in remarkably similar ways during the early years of life. Brandt et al. (2012) describe language as a special type of music. According to them, children do not actually learn language but acquire it from their environment, constantly listening to speech intentionally and unintentionally. They are exposed to speech in various aspects, intonations, rhythms, melodies, and different loudness, and they connect it intuitively with appropriate situations and contexts. Without the ability to listen and recognize musical characteristics, we would not be able to learn language. In addition to the timbre, young children are sensitive to the rhythmic component of language (Nazzi et al., 1998). Children can also notice differences in numerous other linguistic characteristics precisely based on the musical aspects of language. Young children's attention to rhythm indicates that they absorb the sound aspects of their native language—rhythm, stress, and phonemes—in much the same way we listen to music (Ramus et al., 1999). According to Brandt et al. (2012), young children use the musical components of language (rhythm, timbre, and intonation) as a foundation and springboard for acquiring language's semantic and syntactic structures. Therefore, young children listen to the sounds of language not to understand or obtain information but to understand the meaning of words. Children are not cognitively mature enough to understand how language works and why, but they still use it correctly and, over time, only improve its application and enrich their vocabulary. Since the human brain processes music and language in very similar ways, research (Adams et al., 1998; Ericson & Juliebo, 1998) has confirmed that musical activities have an impact on the development of children's phonological awareness, which is crucial for early learning to read and write. The authors recommend integrating music into non-musical activities to encourage children's phonological awareness and advocate using rhyme, or rhyming verse, as an effective mechanism for building awareness of word meaning and associations.

Numerous studies have shown that music is the most natural way to develop speech. Degrave (2017) found that singing words contributes to language learning and the acquisition of accents compared to just pronouncing them rhythmically or without rhythm. Bangert et al. (2006) found in their research that musicians, unlike non-musicians, have more substantial brain activity in the area associated with language and speech. Research has shown that children with musical experience are better at distinguishing speech syllables than children who do not have this experience (Hallam, 2010), which indicates the development of auditory perception through music. Hurwitz et al. (1975) conducted a study to test whether music education improves children's reading skills in the first grade of primary school. The study revealed that children who participated in a music course demonstrated significantly better reading results compared to those who did not participate in musical activities. Experts who study the effects of music believe that musical activities impact the brain's functions during language acquisition, which later leads to the successful association of words with meaning, better vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. Ludke and Weinmann (2012) believe that music helps verbal memory, which is important for mastering reading comprehension (Brady, 1991). Ho, Cheung and Chan (2003) conducted a study with boys aged six to fifteen, concluding that boys with musical education significantly excelled in verbal learning and information retention. Chan, Ho and Cheung (1998) concluded that learning to play a musical instrument enhances word retention. Learning to listen is a prerequisite for learning anything (Mayesky, 1986). In their research on active listening skills, Flohr et al. (1996) concluded that exposure to musical activities in children changes and improves brain functions related to listening.

We can conclude that involving children in musical activities stimulates speech development. Therefore, our article describes types of music intended for younger children that can serve the purpose of speech developmedobrnt and language acquisition. These include children's songs, singing games, sung and spoken rhymes, games with listening to music, and movement with music.

Children's songs

The following factors should be considered when selecting a song for children to sing: 1) the aesthetic value of the song, 2) the appropriateness of the textual content of the song to the age of the children, 3) the appropriateness of the song's scope to the children's capabilities, 4) the melodic and rhythmic interest of the song, 5) the logical melodiousness of the song, 6) the logical connection between the melody and the lyrics of the song, 7) thematic interest, i.e., whether the song's content will arouse interest in singing, 8) the didactic applicability of the song to develop singing abilities (Radočaj-Jerković, 2017). We can conclude from the aforementioned factors that when selecting a song, we should consider its type and scope, tempo, rhythm, and tonality. Young children should primarily sing children's songs. At the same time, children should not be sung with songs from popular music that are current hits (Šulentić Begić, 2010). Welch (2005) believes that interaction with the mother and her singing culture shapes young children's singing in early childhood, which is not surprising given the dominance of the family or home environment for early socialization (Young & Ilari, 2012).

Furthermore, when choosing a song to sing with children, kindergarten teachers should keep in mind which songs children enjoy, which will undoubtedly contribute to developing a love of singing. The range of songs should be within the range of children's voices, which for younger children is approximately c^1 to c^2. It is necessary to sing songs in the given intonation and not in the one that suits the teacher because this intonation is too deep for children, and they will not adopt the song's melody. Children's singing apparatus will not develop without proper intonation, which cannot be made up later in life. Therefore, teachers are responsible for developing a child's singing voice (Šulentić Begić, 2010), i.e., singing ability. Exposure to a musical environment typically leads to developing an individual's singing ability. However, negative comments during childhood, especially from adults such as parents and teachers, can harm the singer's behavior and the realization of musical potential. The most common leading cause of "unsuccessful" singing is a mismatch between singing abilities and singing tasks at a certain point in childhood (Welch, 2005). Research has established that singing ability is a developmental process rather than an innate one (Atterbury, 1984; Goetze et al., 1990; Welch, 2005). Singing ability may depend on singing instruction, i.e., positive or negative feedback (Goetze et al., 1990). Therefore, the type of feedback a child receives about their singing is crucial (Svec, 2015). We must teach children to control pitch and listen to their voices when speaking and singing. If a child cannot repeat the first tone of a song, this may mean that they have not yet learned how to use their voice (Dobrota, 2002). As for the tempo and rhythm of songs, younger children should sing songs with simpler melodies and rhythms and a moderate tempo. Of course, with young children, songs should also be sung at a faster tempo, but only after they have mastered them at a slower tempo. Namely, if we start singing at a fast tempo right away, then inaccuracies in intonation, rhythm, and pronunciation may occur. When choosing songs, we should also take into account the tonality. Namely, research by Dobrota and Reić Ercegovac (2014) showed that songs in a major key are usually associated with happiness, unlike sadness, which is associated with songs composed in a minor key. Therefore, it is not surprising that Radičević and Šulentić Begić (2010) found that younger children like to sing songs in a minor key the least. However, Šulentić Begić (2010) found that for children, it is not the tonality that is crucial but rather the song's character, which is mainly influenced by the tempo of the song's performance. Namely, a faster tempo creates an impression of playfulness, which younger children prefer.

Singing songs for children contributes to the development of their singing abilities, including a sense of intonation, pitch, timbre, and melody. Additionally, it fosters the development of dynamics, rhythm, meter, and tempo, as well as musical memory and voice listening skills, all of which are essential for speech and language acquisition.

Singing games

Singing games, or more precisely, games with singing songs, are a type of game that involves movement. Every game adheres to established rules during the singing phase. This type of game should be performed exclusively without instrumental accompaniment, and the song that is sung along with the game must have all the characteristics of a good song. This implies that the physical exertion of the game necessitates a melody range smaller than the child's vocal range, and it is advisable to steer clear of songs with intricate rhythms. Every game requires specific movement skills. Singing games utilize basic movements such as walking, running, jumping, and arm movements (Manasteriotti, 1981). Manasteriotti (1981) divides musical singing games into four categories: games in a circle, games in a column, free-form games, and games of mixed forms.

Games in a circle, whether performed as a connected or disconnected circle or a carousel, make up the largest group of singing games. In this type of game, children imitate individual scenes contained in the text of a song with harmonious movements. Sometimes, a single child acts, calling on the other children in the circle to perform specific movements. Children often perform movements unrelated to the song's text, including walking in the middle or along the circle's edge, elementary dance motifs, and various rhythmic movements. Children perform games in a column by forming a line and positioning themselves next to or behind each other. The form of this game arose from the song's content. Typically, a player assumes the primary role, which may remain constant or alter as the game progresses.

Regarding movements, the emphasis is on rhythmic gait, spatial orientation in a column or line, and maintaining balance when moving from jumping to standing (Manasteriotti, 1981). Free-form games are the most complex yet also the most flexible category of games that involve singing. The performance depends on the content of the game. For example, in running chases, in the free performance of individual actions, and collective pantomime movements, a fixed form of the game would inhibit the individual creativity of the children (Manasteriotti, 1981). However, children can also perform these games in the shape of a circle or, for instance, a column. Mixed-form games combine two or more basic forms, for example, a column and a wheel, with free movements. These games use simple means of expression, such as music, movement, and words, and the content they cover refers to living beings and inanimate objects (Manasteriotti, 1981).

Games that involve singing songs contribute to various aspects of musical ability, such as the development of intonation, pitch, timbre, melody, dynamics, rhythm, meter, and tempo. They also enhance memory, coordination, and motor skills, as the movement accompanied by singing must align with the song's meter and rhythm.

Sung and spoken rhymes

The term sung and spoken rhymes is defined as a counting classification in children's play and, in a musical sense, as a children's song in which numbers play a significant role or as a song related in content to counting or sequencing (Šonje, 2000). In addition to verbal expression, children spontaneously communicate through musical expression and sung and spoken rhymes are probably the most natural way for children to express themselves musically. Sung and spoken rhymes play a ubiquitous role in children's play, assisting them in selecting games, players, and roles, determining the sequence of performances in various forms of play, and introducing them to a diverse range of content and play forms. In sung and spoken rhymes, children experience themselves in space and time about the people and things around them and the space and time of the music itself. Therefore, in a musical sense, rhymes help develop musical ability, primarily developing a sense of rhythm and time, musical memory, and a sense of intonation (Jurišić & Sam Palmić, 2002). The rhymes serve as a musical-verbal form of communication, provide a musical-emotional pleasure for children, and greatly motivate them to participate in musical activities. The rhymes are crucial in small-scale musical activities such as auditory games, movement-based games, and vocalization exercises. All children accept it because it is the most adaptable form of musical content, not just one type. It can encourage the child to engage in any activity, with the condition that some of its elements match the essential content of the activity (Jurišić & Sam Palmić, 2002).

The musical component divides rhymes into spoken and sung forms. With spoken rhymes, we develop a sense of rhythm; with sung rhymes, we also develop a sense of intonation. Since rhymes follow the rhythm of words, they develop a sense of time signatures (evenness in performance), rhythmic relationships and duration (rhythm), and tempo and its changes (speed of performance) (Milenković & Dragojević, 2009). Spoken rhymes execute the linguistic-rhythmic structure on a consistent tone or pitch from start to finish. Stringing together, or pronouncing, words in one tone makes the exact words musical, i.e., words set to music. The tones of spoken rhymes differ in duration, volume, and color but not in pitch. Spoken rhymes have a strong intellectual and musical stimulus and develop musical and speech abilities

(Jurišić & Sam Palmić, 2002). A sung rhyme consists of tones that differ in pitch but have a very pronounced rhythm. Unlike spoken rhymes, sung rhymes, with their words set to music, closely resemble a song. The melody of such a rhyme is very simple; a sung rhyme can have only two tones of different pitches in its sequence. A sung rhyme can also consist of three, and sometimes four, tones of different pitches while still representing a song. A sung rhyme is “free” and devoid of any tonal framework. Its structure is closer to the pentatonic scale. It is attractive to children because it does not contain more complex semitones for auditory perception and performance (Jurišić & Sam Palmić, 2002). Three types of rhymes relate to the text: concrete rhymes that contain meaningful text, meaningless rhymes that contain syllables with a specific rhythm, and combined rhymes that alternate between concrete and meaningless text. Rhymes primarily develop a sense of rhythm, but in addition to that, they also develop musical memory and a sense of intonation, which are key elements for speech prosody and language development. Children can use their bodies as instruments or play instruments from their musical repertoire (sticks, castanets, cymbals, rattles, triangles) and become familiar with them by using rhymes in musical activities (Manasteriotti, 1981).

From the above, it is clear that sung and spoken rhymes primarily aid in developing a sense of rhythm, meter, tempo, and intonation. They also aid in developing musical memory, motor skills, and coordination, as counting songs involves movements in harmony with the rhyme's meter or rhythm.

Games with listening to music and movement with music

An adult prepares movements to the music of their choice in advance and practices them with the children during music games and movement activities. It is also possible for children to move while listening to the music. Music games should be performed with compositions that have pronounced musical-expressive components such as rhythm, meter, and timbre since children step, jump, clap, move their hands, or use their bodies as instruments during certain parts of the composition (Šulentić Begić, 2010). Children should coordinate their movements with the rhythm (dancing, stepping) or meter (conducting, stepping) of the composition, or they can mimic the playing of a specific instrument with their movements when they appear. Of course, the educator guides all these movements and actions, assisting children in listening to and noticing the meter, rhythm, and instruments.

Given the aforementioned characteristics, games that involve listening to music and movement significantly contribute to developing a sense of rhythm, meter, and tempo, as well as enhancing coordination and motor skills. Some games also aid in the development of the ability to recognize the color of tones by observing the instruments.

Conclusion

Parents and educators should organize activities with children, such as singing, dancing, movement to music, and playing children's instruments (Thomas, 2008). This can also involve quasi-musical communication, such as parents and grandparents carrying and swinging to music or singing to children (Gembris & Davidson, 2002; Kemp & Mills, 2002). Parents can use songs, simple melodies, and rhythmic games to expose children to different sounds, words, and sentence structures in everyday life. At the same time, educators can also use music as a learning tool in kindergartens, leading musical games and activities in which children learn new words, sounds, and melodies (Marasović, 2024). All of the above musical activities can also contribute to avoiding speech difficulties that children may have, which are manifested when they arrive at school (Velički & Katarinčić, 2011).

Children's musical genres, including children's songs, singing games, sung and spoken rhymes, and games involving music and movement, aid in developing musical skills such as intonation, pitch, timbre, melody, dynamics, rhythm, meter, and tempo. They also foster the development of musical memory and the ability to listen to others' and one's own voice during singing and speech. Speech and language characteristics include tone and intonation, loudness and emphasis, timbre, spectral composition, pauses, speech speed, rhythm, speech modulations, pronouncing vowels, facial expressions, and gestures (Škarić, 1991). We can observe that the elements of musical ability and the characteristics of speech and language almost coincide, confirming the conclusion that musical activities can aid in developing speech and language acquisition. However, adults play a crucial role in facilitating young children's initial interactions with music and should support them.

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TED to fight tedious classes. TED-based activities for practical English classes – a report

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In 2024, Małgorzata Karczewska, PhD, Assistant Professor at the University of Zielona Góra, Poland, published an e-book titled *TED to fight tedious classes. TED-based activities for practical English classes*. The e-book is based on the author's experience as a practical English teacher working with English Philology students. During her classes, Dr. Karczewska uses TED-based content mainly for listening classes, but in the e-book, exercises aiming at developing speaking and writing skills, as well as practicing grammar and expanding vocabulary resources are offered. The idea to use TED content stemmed from the will to make classes more intriguing for rather advanced speakers of English. The TED website offers free access to both talks and lessons on various topics of different duration, which allows teachers to adjust the teaching material to the needs of a given group of learners. In addition, subtitles in English and many other languages are available, which facilitates learning, especially self-study. In the e-book, only TED lessons, and not TED talks, are used as a base for exercises.

The e-book is divided into four main parts, namely: Language and communication, The animal world, Medical issues and Psychology and well-being, and the acronym created, LAMP, is a metaphor of what TED-based classes can be: a source of light in the study of English. Each chapter contains five units based on TED lessons related to its topic and follows a similar pattern, which gives the impression of a clear structure and consistency. All chapters begin with a warm-up activity in which the topic of a given chapter is introduced with an invitation to a short discussion among students (in pairs) who can exchange their initial ideas about the topic combined with personal experiences, if applicable. In this part of the lesson, specialized terminology may also be introduced, if necessary, to enable full understanding of a given lesson. The following part contains a listening exercise in which students are expected to listen to the recording (usually twice) and answer questions related to the content of the recording. The order of questions follows the order of appearance of given information in the recording to facilitate the task. The following task contains questions for further discussion related to the topic, some students' experience or search for information online may be required. After this speaking practice, students are expected to focus on selected vocabulary items used in the recording: sentences or phrases are quoted with certain vocabulary items in bold: the idea is to understand their meaning in context. In this vocabulary practice part, there also exercises in which students may be asked to focus on idioms or proverbs related to the topic, or may be asked to look for specific vocabulary, e.g. names of males and females of animals species. Some units end with additional exercises on grammar, writing or speaking. All the tasks are thematically related to the topic of the lesson. As one can observe, TED content can be used for practicing listening, but it can be also useful for speaking and writing as well as grammar-oriented exercises. In all cases, students expand their vocabulary resources.

The use of TED content gives an opportunity to listen to a variety of English accents in authentic materials and is a chance to expand one's knowledge about the world. In this way, students realize that being able to speak and understand English gives them access to knowledge available online. As I stated in the preface to my e-book, students learn English indirectly while exploring a world of ideas, and their expanding knowledge and skills are a by-product of listening to the recordings. Although some recordings require more advanced knowledge, TED lessons can be used for students with at least B1 level of competence with appropriate assistance of the teacher. Another advantage of TED-based classes is the fact that students who wish to revise the material or those who were absent have free access to the materials at home.

I do hope that my e-book can be a valuable tool in teaching and learning English in an attractive way. Those of you who would like to receive a free copy of my e-book are asked to contact me at M.Karczewska@in.uz.zgora.pl. I wish you fruitful work with TED content.

Maritime education and language as the acting link between bridge and engine room – a report

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Abstract
Maritime education is a significant component in preparing future seafarers with the technical competence, practical skills, and communication abilities required in the global shipping industry. As a major seafarers' provider, the Philippines aligns Maritime Education and Training (MET) with the global standards of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW). A key component of MET is the language training in Maritime English and Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), which has a profound impact on maritime students' communication competence. The report, applying the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky, investigated the impact and found that the command of Maritime English is essential in ensuring safety and efficient operations. Simulation exercises, situated language learning, and international training programs provide experiential language competence to maritime students, resulting in the ability to navigate multicultural shipboard environments efficiently. The findings indicated that MET is recognized by the students as essential in communication skill development to ensure international standard compliance, efficient use of SMCP, and clear interpersonal and technical communication. Moreover, experiential learning activities such as emergency training and multicultural exposure also affect the students' value of language training. The report concluded that systematic language training in MET courses is essential in providing competent seafarers with practical communication competencies, ensuring safer and more efficient maritime operations.

Keywords: *communication competence, maritime education, maritime English, seafarer training, simulation-based learning, standard marine communication phrases (SMCP)*

Introduction

Maritime education is highly important in preparing future seafarers to work in the international shipping sector. Globally, maritime schools help students gain technical skills, practical knowledge and, most importantly, good communication skills to keep people safe and things running smoothly at sea (Jamil & Bhuiyan, 2021; Moreno, et al., 2022). Chibana (2023) affirmed that the Philippines, being among the top providers of seafarers, puts much importance on maritime education and training (MET) to meet international requirements. These requirements, set by organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW), are crucial in ensuring the safety and efficiency of maritime operations. Excellent MET programs need language education as a key element because seafaring involves people from different countries and relies on Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) to avoid miscommunication.

Theories such as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory identify how language enables individuals to think and learn, particularly in occupations where communication is crucial (Tzuriel & Tzuriel, 2021). Wahyuni et al. (2022) revealed that Maritime English is the standard language employed in shipping. Consequently, Barus and Simanjuntak (2023) confirmed that language issues could result in maritime incidents, which makes it crucial for MET schools to have well-established language education. These schools employ various strategies to develop students' language skills, including immersive language learning, practical training in communication exercises, and role-playing and simulations to simulate real-life language use scenarios.

Effective communication aboard an ocean-going ship demands proper utilization of technical and operational terminology, especially during an emergency when miscommunication can be dangerous. Dewan et al. (2023) disclosed that students undergoing practical training, including radio communication exercises, bridge simulation, and real maritime cases, significantly enhance their Maritime English, instilling confidence in their ability to perform better and comply with safety standards.

Simulated shipboard scenarios, role-playing, and actual experiences play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and confidence in language learning. Institutions that integrate bridge and engine room simulation in classes enable students to apply languages in real situations, preparing them for the challenges of their maritime careers. International training and exchange programs also introduce cadets to multicultural language environments, reinforcing the importance of acquiring a standard maritime communication system. These practical experiences not only enhance language skills but also instill confidence in students, ensuring they are well-prepared for effective communication in their maritime careers.

Learning materials, such as maritime textbooks, training manuals, computer simulations, and state-of-the-art facilities like high-tech deck and engine simulators, must be meticulously aligned to maritime communication standards. This alignment is not just a formality but a crucial step in ensuring that the students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for the challenges of their maritime careers. These materials lay the foundation for effective communication onboard ships, making them a vital part of maritime education.

A questionnaire of 179 sampled maritime students who participated in an international training program was employed to examine their perceptions of the applicability of their initial maritime training and education. The survey covered specifically the perceived utility of the foundation in the form of language on board ships. The outcomes of this investigation revealed the significant role of Maritime Education and Training (MET) in acquiring linguistic skills for effective shipboard communication.

The following statements have been concluded from the researcher's survey.

1. *Maritime students consider Maritime Education and Training (MET) as a cornerstone in developing the language skills* necessary for effective communication onboard, particularly in a multicultural environment. Their training *has instilled in them the recognition that proficiency in Maritime English is not just significant, but a key factor in adhering to international communication standards and preventing misunderstandings that could lead to accidents*. First-hand experiences and real-world scenarios demonstrate that when maritime students are well-trained in maritime language, they contribute to a safer, more efficient working environment at sea, reassuring the audience about the quality of MET.

2. Maritime students asserted that the knowledge and skills gained through MET have significantly improved their communication in several key areas but not limited to: (a) *proficiency in Maritime English has allowed them to follow international communication standards, reducing the risk of miscommunication.* (b) *MET has equipped them to use Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) effectively during routine and emergencies.* (c) *students noted that their training helped them navigate multicultural environments onboard, enhancing interpersonal communication*. (d) *MET has improved its technical communication, clearly articulating operational procedures and safety protocols.* (e) *they emphasized the importance of MET in developing language skills for reporting incidents, ensuring that critical information is conveyed accurately to shore personnel and authorities.*

3. The students disclosed that *specific incidents and real-life experiences have influenced and significantly shaped their attitudes toward the use of language on ships*. For example, *during onboard training simulations or exercises*, students immediately recognize the importance of effective

communication, mainly when working with multicultural crews and high-stress environments. One common experience influencing their attitudes is *emergency drills*, where concise and clear communication becomes noticeable and crucial to preventing accidents. More so, students recalled experiences during port calls or communication with shore-based personnel, where language differences sometimes lead to confusion or delays. These experiences lead students to understand that their Maritime Education and Training (MET), especially in studying Maritime English and Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), is not just important but highly important for effective communication.

Conclusion

The role of education, particularly Maritime Education and Training (MET), in shaping language proficiency is significant and indispensable in ensuring effective communication onboard ships. Education equips maritime students with the language skills necessary to navigate complex, multicultural environments and follow international communication standards, which are crucial for the safety and efficiency of maritime operations. Through MET, students develop essential competencies in Maritime English and Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), vital for clear communication during routine tasks, emergency drills, and interaction with shore-based personnel. These experiences emphasize that education enhances linguistic abilities and fosters a deeper understanding of how language directly impacts operational success and safety.

By making language training a priority in MET programs, maritime schools, assisted by international agencies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Philippine government, and the education community, can ensure that future seafarers are well-equipped with the language proficiency required for effective communication onboard. This involves being proficient in Maritime English and Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) and capable of working in multicultural settings and addressing real-world communication issues. Teachers play a significant role in providing targeted lessons and practical exercises by international standards. With this collaboration, maritime schools can produce well-equipped professionals who make the maritime industry safer and more efficient, while the Philippine government and education community assist in integrating these language skills into national and international maritime regulations.

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The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking. Concepts and Tools – a book review

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The eighth edition of *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* by Richard Paul and Linda Elder is the best-selling title in the series of twenty-five books published by the same authors in the *Thinker's Guide Library*.

Dr. Richard Paul was an American philosopher and a leading proponent of critical thinking until his death in 2015. He developed the concepts, principles, and theory essential to a robust and fair-minded conception of critical thinking. He authored more than 200 articles and seven books on critical thinking and conducted hundreds of workshops for educators. He was Chair of the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, founded the Center for Critical Thinking followed by the Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Dr. Linda Elder, an educational psychologist and lecturer laid the foundation for the field of Criticology. She is the author of *Critical Thinking Therapy: For Happiness and Self-Actualization* and co-author of four books and all of the *Thinker's Guides*. She has a particular interest in the relationship between thought and emotion, the interplay of cognitive and affective domains, and the stages of critical thinking development. She is the president of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and executive director of the Center for Critical Thinking, both of which aim to bring critical thinking into education as well as into public, professional, and private life.

The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools integrates philosophy, psychology, cognitive psychology, sociology and education. Paul and Elder define critical thinking as 'the art of analyzing and evaluating thought processes with a view to improving them. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It requires rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as a commitment to overcoming our native egocentrism and sociocentrism. It advances the character and sensitivities of the dedicated person through the explicit cultivation of intellectual virtues.'

This definition, presented in the introduction, is elaborated across six chapters, where theoretical insights are paired with practical tools, such as lists, sets of questions, templates, and diagrams, designed for both individual and classroom use.

The authors guide readers not only in learning *about* critical thinking but also in *practicing* it across academic, professional, social, and personal contexts. In **Chapter 1** the reader is introduced to the basic structures of all thinking – the *Eight Elements of Thought*/*Reasoning* and is invited to answer questions framed by them. The purpose of the task is to develop the ability to *think for a purpose* within *a point of view*, to *ask questions*, to *use assumptions* that lead to *implications and consequences*, and to apply *concepts* (theories, definitions, principles) and *information* in order to *interpret, make inferences* and *draw conclusions.*

Chapter 2 enables the thinker to evaluate the quality of their reasoning through the use of ten *Essential Intellectual Standards of All Human Thought*. Each standard has a single-word name—*Clarity*, *Accuracy*, *Precision*, *Relevance*, *Depth*, *Breadth*, *Logic*, *Significance*, *Fairness*, and *Sufficiency*—and is applied by asking and answering guiding questions. For example, in the case of *Accuracy*, one might ask: How could we check on that? How could we find out if that is true? How could we verify or test that? For Fairness, the questions include: Do I have a vested interest in this issue? Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others? Have we fully and fairly considered the important information relevant to the issue? Applying Intellectual Standards, thinkers identify their weaknesses in formulating and expressing thoughts along with the areas of egocentrism or sociocentrism.

Chapter 3 discusses *Intellectual Virtues* (traits) of a fair-minded critical thinker. They include *Intellectual Integrity*, *Intellectual Humility*, *Confidence in Reason*, *Intellectual Perseverance*, *Fairmindedness*, *Intellectual Courage*, *Intellectual Empathy*, and *Intellectual Autonomy*. They are opposed by intellectual vices such as *Intellectual Hypocrisy*, *Intellectual Arrogance, Distrust in Reason*, *Intellectual Laziness*, *Intellectual Unfairness*, *Intellectual Cowardice*, *Intellectual Narrow-mindedness*, and *Intellectual* Conformity. Each virtue is interconnected with all others and indispensable for fair-minded critical thinkers. For instance, *Confidence in Reason* enables individuals to think coherently and logically, form rational viewpoints, draw reasonable conclusions, persuade others through reasoning, and become more reasonable themselves. *Intellectual Empathy* allows one to imaginatively place oneself in another's position in order to understand and reconstruct their viewpoints accurately, using their assumptions and ideas. The quality of intellectual empathy depends on the quality and skillful of all the other virtues in a given situation.

Chapter 4, entitled *The Spirit of Critical Thinking*, reflects the authors' conviction that critical thinkers who can discern the logic of anything are effective questioners and problem solvers. Such thinkers are prepared to analyze the logic of a text, evaluate an author's reasoning, and assess research. To develop these abilities the authors provide readers with practical tools: a template (based on the Elements of Reasoning) for deconstructing an article, essay, or textbook chapter; a list of criteria for evaluating reasoning (also based on the Elements of Reasoning); and a set of guidelines (additionally grounded in Intellectual Standards) for analyzing and assessing research. These study aids are ready to use.

The type of reasoning required depends on the kind of question. The authors divide questions into three categories: *Questions of procedure*, which are settled by facts, definitions, or both, and have one correct answer (as in physics, mathematics, or biology); *Questions of preference*, which call for a subjective opinion that cannot be assessed and *Questions of judgment* which have more than one answer from different perspectives. They are most common in history, philosophy, economics and sociology, and are best answered through the application of Intellectual Standards. This categorization allows answers to be structured according to the type of question.

In the development of critical thinking, humans first engage in *Unreflective Lower-Order Thinking*, at a low-to-mixed skill level, which often relies on gut intuition and tends to be self-serving and self-deceptive. Then they move to *Selectively Reflective Higher-Order Thinking*, at a high skill level, but lacking the vocabulary of critical thinking. It is inconsistently fair and may involve sophistry. Finally, they achieve *Explicitly Reflective Highest-Order Thinking*, at the highest skill level, characterized by the routine use of critical thinking tools to analyze and assess thought. It is consistently fair.

This classification highlights that the quality of reasoning, the accuracy of applying critical thinking vocabulary and the degree of fairmindedness are closely interconnected. The more advanced the critical thinking, the more deliberate the use of concepts and tools – such as the Elements of Thought and Universal Intellectual Standards – within the framework of cultivated Intellectual Virtues becomes. Given the authors' conviction that the quality of our lives depends on the quality of our reasoning, it follows that the success of our actions is determined by the quality of reasoning. This idea leads to **Chapter 5:** *The Human Mind Is Frequently Irrational While Having the Capacity for Rational Thought* where the issues of egocentrism and sociocentrism distorting the thinker's perception of reality and their functioning in society are discussed.

Humans perceive reality through the lenses of prejudice, bias, selfishness, projection, group loyalty and other distortions. Unreflective egocentric thinkers react to the 'unsuccessful' (in their view) outcomes of their thinking and actions with arrogance, resentment, anger, depression, alienation, apathy or irritability.

When they notice that an outcome they perceive as 'successful', they reward themselves with positive emotions. Such thinkers do not see the limitations of their own perspectives and do not consider the rights and needs of others. Their egoistic actions, accompanied by negative emotions and self-serving communication, do not make them intellectually and emotionally empathetic.

Naturally, people are 'culture bound' and function in society through one or more forms of sociocentric thought: group selfishness, group validation, group control or group conformity. These tendencies lie at an unconscious level and often go unnoticed. To reach their sociocentric aims and feel ethical, they convince themselves one thing on the surface while acting upon another. Through deception mechanisms, they perceive their egocentric or sociocentric thoughts and actions fair-minded. In the authors' view, people can reduce their egocentrism and sociocentrism applying the Elements of Reasoning to their thinking and cultivation of Intellectual Traits.

Chapter 6: *Envisioning Critical Societies* is based on the conviction that humans have the capacity to be rational and fair and that this capacity must be cultivated. The authors assume that critical societies will develop to the extent that the principles of critical thinking become peoples' guiding principles of life. Among the most important twenty barriers to the formation of critical societies are failure to take thinking seriously; superficial awareness of critical thinking without adherence to its principles; cultural narrowness; uncritical acceptance of authority figures and bureaucratic rules; disregard for the freedom of thought and speech; lack of appreciation for spontaneity and authenticity; the inability to achieve self-actualization, self-command, or enlightenment due to a lack of mastery over one's thoughts and the relationship between thoughts and emotions.

Richard Paul and Linda Elder's forty-eight-page *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking. Concepts and Tools* is a coherent and well-balanced introduction to Paul's theory of critical thinking. It gives the reader (ranging from a student to a scholar) core knowledge and the opportunity to practice critical thinking simultaneously. The book is written in accessible language that incorporates the critical analytic vocabulary of English. Explanatory material – organized logically into tables, lists, templates, diagrams, and sets of questions – helps readers shape thinking triggering actions in all spheres of life and disciplines. The set of Intellectual Standards applicable to any human message and the constellation of Intellectual Virtues are, besides the Elements of Reasoning invaluable tools that enable an unreflective thinker to become an advanced or accomplished one. *The Miniature Guide to Critical thinking* is an excellent starting point for students, teachers, professionals and social groups seeking to train the mind, at least with the use of the authors' other twenty four books in the Thinker's Guide Library.

Exploring Psychology in Language Learning and Teaching – a book review

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The book Exploring Psychology in Language Learning and Teaching (Mercer, Williams and Ryan, 2015) is authored by Marion Williams, Sarah Mercer, and Stephen Ryan. Marion Williams is an established educator and former senior lecturer at the University of Exeter, later founding the teacher training institute ITEFL. Sarah Mercer is Professor of Foreign Language Teaching at the University of Graz, Austria, and is widely recognized for her research on language teacher psychology, learner autonomy, and positive psychology in language education. Stephen Ryan is a professor in the School of Culture, Media, and Society at Waseda University in Tokyo, with research covering various aspects of psychology in language learning. Their combined expertise ensures a comprehensive treatment of the subject, drawing from applied linguistics, psychology, and classroom practice.

The book explores psychology in language learning and teaching across eight chapters, each addressing a specific aspect relevant to EFL teachers. It aims to support both current and future English teachers in understanding human psychology, offering practical principles and a hands-on perspective for classroom application. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for further study. The text connects to the Educational Role of Language framework, particularly Language as a determinant of educational success (Scope Major A) and Language as a reflection of human mental life (Scope Major B), as well as Language as a tool for identity-building (Scope Minor D), emphasizing the personal, cultural, and social dimensions of language learning. In this context, L2 anxiety is highlighted as particularly significant, as it relates directly to self-image and learners' ability to express themselves.

The first chapter introduces fundamental theoretical principles underpinning language teaching, covering four major perspectives: the positivist approach, cognitive approaches, humanism, and sociocultural and ecological perspectives. Readers gain insight into teaching foundations, such as the behaviourist view that rewards reinforce desired behaviour. Practical exercises help students understand methods arising from each theory, while the authors emphasize that no single universal method works in every context. Teachers are encouraged to experiment and adapt methods to best fit their groups and circumstances—a theme repeated throughout the book.

Chapter 2 focuses on groups, exploring common phenomena teachers encounter, including group formation, developmental stages, group dynamics, competition, leadership, and the importance of avoiding isolation of individuals from the group context. The authors caution against presenting role models as unattainable for students and note that while a cooperative environment is beneficial, group coherence can sometimes stifle creativity if the desire to conform becomes too strong. They also advise careful selection of EFL games, as competitive games may create "winners" and "losers," leading to frustration or disengagement. Instead, collaborative tasks where all students can succeed are recommended.

Chapter 3, The Self, examines individual identity, built on the premise that teachers must first understand themselves to better understand their students. It addresses the self as shaped by internal experiences (emotions, thoughts) and external influences (feedback, peers, culture). Learners' self-image develops through interpretation of successes, failures, and social feedback. Teachers can strengthen positive self-image by giving meaningful feedback, encouraging reflection, fostering respect, and recognizing each learner's potential. The chapter also discusses social comparison, including the "big-fish-little-pond" effect, in which students of equal ability may experience different motivation and outcomes depending on their learning environment.

Chapter 4 examines beliefs, which may be facilitative—helping learners progress—or debilitative—hindering them. Teachers are encouraged to respect diverse belief systems, as imposing one's own may cause resistance, especially at a cultural level. The authors stress attention to cultural perspectives embedded in teaching materials, which may challenge students' usual interaction patterns. A particularly useful analogy compares learning a language communicatively to learning to drive: practical skills (know-how) matter more than theoretical knowledge (know-about), aligning with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020). The chapter also advocates fostering a growth mindset, viewing intelligence as expandable through effort, which can enhance motivation and achievement.

Chapter 5, Affect, distinguishes between emotions and feelings, noting that feelings are often more personal and harder to label. Emotions and cognition are inseparable, directly affecting cognitive processes. The authors draw on Schumann's (1999) concept of appraisal, which explains why students may respond differently to the same activity depending on factors like novelty, pleasantness, or goal relevance. The chapter also links to Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, which posits that negative emotions can block input and hinder learning.

Chapter 6 addresses motivation, highlighting the ambiguity surrounding the term and its implications for teaching strategies. Motivation is not solely about academic achievement but also about engagement with the learning process. Setting clear, achievable goals, providing consistent feedback, and fostering positive emotions enhance motivation. The chapter discusses motivational theories chronologically, culminating in self-determination theory, and offers practical suggestions for fostering learner-centred strategies.

Chapter 7 examines agency, defined as learners' capacity to make intentional choices and take purposeful action in their learning. Agency is closely connected to self-confidence, motivation, and access to resources. Learners may apply strategies in different ways: some facilitate long-term development, while others address immediate goals. Teachers are encouraged to support learners in selecting and refining strategies, fostering metacognitive awareness through planning, monitoring, and reflection. To further promote agency, teachers should help learners set goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART; Doran, 1981).

The final chapter integrates the book's themes through Willingness to Communicate (WTC), illustrating how motivation, confidence, affect, and group dynamics converge in practice. WTC is dynamic: a student may speak confidently in one context but hesitate in another. Teachers are encouraged to remain sensitive to individual differences and to implement practical awareness-raising activities while maintaining holistic principles. This recognition of the "messiness" of teaching, balanced with clear principles, is one of the book's greatest strengths.

Reading the book, I felt a strong connection between my experiences and the phenomena described. For example, I have experienced the "big-fish-little-pond" effect, which shows how equally capable students may feel confident or inadequate depending on their group context. In secondary school, being among peers less focused on English allowed me to build confidence that later motivated me to pursue a PhD in English studies. In my teaching practice, I often observe students using grammar correctly without being able to explain rules, fulfilling communicative purposes and supporting the book's emphasis on know-how over know-about. I also relate strongly to Schumann's (1999) concept of appraisal, which explains why students react differently to the same activity based on novelty, pleasantness, or goal relevance. Many activities succeed in one class but fail in another—not due to motivation, but because tasks do not align with immediate goals. The chapters remind me of the importance of acknowledging these dynamics, sharing metacognitive strategies with students, and guiding them toward SMART goals that support long-term aspirations.

The authors occasionally revisit examples to clarify key points. While repetition can support learning—as we say in Slovakia, “repetition is the mother of knowledge”—it sometimes reduces conciseness. Nonetheless, the book offers numerous practical insights thoughtfully connected to each chapter. It will resonate with language teachers, teacher educators, applied linguists, and researchers alike. Teacher trainers may find it invaluable for course design, teachers will gain actionable classroom strategies, and researchers will appreciate the integration of classic and contemporary perspectives. Overall, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to teachers and teacher trainers. It provides a rich, nuanced overview of how psychology shapes language learning and teaching, enabling readers to better understand—and articulate—the behaviours and phenomena they encounter in classrooms.

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Understanding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Policies and Practices – a book review

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Introduction

Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Policies and Practices (2024), edited by Dr. Smita Sinha (Berhampur University, India), Dr. Abha Gupta (Old Dominion University, USA), and Dr. Pratip Kumar Mishra (Bhubaneswar, India), is a compelling edited volume reflecting aninsightful collaboration among eminent scholars with deep expertise in linguistics, education, literacy, and public administration. The editors bring decades of leadership in equity, language policy, and community engagement.

This collection, introduced by Dr. Pamela Mason (Harvard University), includes 19 well-crafted chapters, an epilogue, and three reflective essays, contributed by authors from Asia, Europe, and North America. Adopting a multidisciplinary lens, spanning linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education, the volume comprehensively addresses global policies and practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The chapters are organized by themes into four sections as listed below. It aligns closely with the *Educational Role of Language* (ERL) framework, especially the major strands concerning discourse formation, language-related identity, and equitable educational access.

Section 1: Conceptualizing diversity, equity, and inclusion

This opening section grounds the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of DEI. It moves beyond definitions by addressing psychological and sociological perspectives, highlighting how language, culture, and education shape identity construction. Topics include the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underprivileged learners, the interplay between language and cultural identity, prejudice in classroom dynamics, and issues of stereotyping and sexism. One chapter also explores how Catholic classrooms grapple with diversity, underscoring the universal challenges of equity in educational contexts.

Chapter 1: Sinha and Das foundationally define DEI, distinguishing diversity, equity, equality, inclusion, and belonging. They emphasize the importance of equity as tailored support to achieve fairness and highlight inclusion as creating environments where all individuals feel genuinely respected and valued. The chapter warns organizations of the critical risks of inadequate DEI implementation.

Chapter 2: Gupta, Lee, and Maira analyze the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate impact on marginalized students in rural India. The study shows evidence of drastic enrollment drops, infrastructural deficits like internet access, disrupted communication and motor skills, and teacher shortages, illustrating the exacerbation of educational inequities during crises.

Chapter 3: Alnefaie and Alyami explore the dynamic interplay between language and culture in shaping identities, advocating for embracing multilingualism and culturally responsive pedagogies as key to fostering inclusive classrooms that nurture academic success and identity formation.

Chapter 4: This philosophical exploration by Molina urges dismantlement of discriminatory paradigms related to race, caste, religion, and gender. Examining global DEI best practices, the chapter advocates shifting focus from differences toward intrinsic human dignity, promoting empathetic, respectful cultures that transcend compliance.

Chapter 5: This chapter by Gupta situates social inequality within persistent divisions like race, caste, and gender, despite biological human unity. It calls for robust educational and policy reforms to confront structural exclusion and to construct societies that are inclusive and equitable.

Section 2: Policies on equity and inclusion

This section examines the policy structures that frame DEI in varied societies. The chapters offer ethnographic insight into language education policies and emphasize linguistic rights as a central principle for empowering marginalized voices. The analyses collectively stress culturally responsive practices and collaborative policymaking as essential tools for fostering equity.

Chapter 6: Saxena traces four decades of ethnographic research on multilingual classrooms, articulating how language education policies profoundly influence equity. It advances translanguaging theory integration with ethnography as a pathway to social justice and learner agency in diverse educational contexts.

Chapter 7: Anju Sahgal Gupta reviews India's constitutional provisions and affirmative action policies aimed at historically marginalized castes, tribes, economically disadvantaged groups, persons with disabilities, and transgender rights. The chapter critically examines policy successes and continuing gaps in enforcement and inclusivity.

Chapter 8: Duruttya employs corpus linguistics to advocate for culturally responsive education, emphasizing pedagogical materials and classroom interactions that respect diverse cultures and languages, fostering empathy and inclusivity within equitable learning environments.

Chapter 9: Badar and Mason document a design-based research approach for educating out-of-school children, highlighting community and policy engagement, collaborative strategy development, and culturally relevant methodologies to include marginalized learners in formal education.

Section 3: Equality, equity, and inclusive society

In this section, chapters expand on DEI in broader cultural and societal contexts. Examples include U.S. adoption policies affecting Indian children, the societal consequences of excluding individuals of low socioeconomic status from healthcare, and the financial empowerment of women through self-help groups. Together, they demonstrate how social, health, and economic inequities intersect, drawing attention to the indispensable role of collective action in building inclusive societies.

Chapter 10: Hernandez examines literacy equity, promoting instruction that values students' cultural and linguistic assets while dismantling structural barriers that perpetuate unequal outcomes, advocating inclusive literacy practices.

Chapter 11: Lee and Gupta assess the amplified health and social inequities confronting Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, situating these within longstanding racialized experiences and urging policies that mitigate such disparities through equity and inclusiveness.

Chapter 12: Pandey explores the experiences of Indian adoptees in the United States, emphasizing identity negotiation and cultural belonging. The chapter advocates culturally sensitive support systems to affirm adoptees' multifaceted identities within multicultural contexts.

Chapter 13: Panigrahi investigates the mental health consequences of exclusion from advanced healthcare by low socio-economic groups, highlighting the psychological toll of structural barriers and stigma, and calling for inclusive health policies to address intersecting inequities.

Chapter 14: Das and Akankshya ethnographically examine India's transgender and Hijra communities, documenting their exclusion, survival strategies, and resilience. The chapter underscores the need for legal recognition, educational inclusion, and social support reforms to promote empowerment and dignity.

Section 4: Gender, inclusion, and empowerment

The final section focuses on gender-based challenges in inclusion and empowerment. Case studies on transgender communities and women's access to technology education reveal the enduring systemic inequalities tied to gender. Nevertheless, the chapters also underscore the transformative effect of inclusive policies, offering practical pathways to foster empowerment.

Chapter 15: This multidisciplinary chapter by Das and Akankshyafocuses on transgender identity search and survival amidst pervasive social exclusion and institutional neglect in India. It combines psychological, sociological, and legal analyses to highlight urgent demands for comprehensive protections and social acceptance.

Chapter 16: Priyabadini and Udgata analyze women's technology education journeys in India, identifying gender stereotypes, mentorship deficits, and socio-cultural challenges. They present success narratives alongside recommendations for policy reforms supporting equitable STEM inclusion and empowerment.

Chapter 17: Mahapatra, Sahool, and colleagues offer empirical evidence of social exclusion faced by transgender communities in India across education, health, and employment sectors. They argue for integrated policy frameworks and societal sensitization to achieve real inclusion.

Chapter 18: Pradhan and Acharya extend gender and inclusion analyses to urban deprived children, highlighting systemic challenges and initiatives promoting equality and empowerment, with a focus on educational interventions and social support mechanisms.

Chapter 19: Mishra quantitatively assesses the empowering role of women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in financial socialization. Emphasizing peer support, collective decision-making, and knowledge-sharing, the chapter positions SHGs as catalysts for women's economic inclusion and community transformation.

Reflective essays

The book concludes with three reflective essays that deepen its critical engagement: the first essay examines the resurgence of identity politics and the complex struggles of marginalized groups for recognition; the second offers a poignant personal narrative of transgender resilience amid social stigma; and the third highlights Rotary International's enduring commitment to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in its global humanitarian work, illustrating how organizations can foster unity and positive social change.

Critical perspectives: **strengths and weaknesses**

The book's strengths lie in its wide international and interdisciplinary scope, adeptly blending theoretical, empirical, and applied perspectives to provide a comprehensive view of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It excels in its rich and nuanced examination of intersectionality, particularly the interrelations of language, culture, identity, and equity across educational and societal domains. The editors' transparent approach to authorship fosters scholarly rigor. However, the volume shows variability in critical depth, with some chapters leaning more toward descriptive narrative than analytical rigor. Additionally, the diverse authorship results in occasional challenges related to consistency of style and integration across chapters, affecting the overall cohesion of the collection.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, *Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Policies and Practices* is a significant interdisciplinary contribution that enriches the field of educational equity and social inclusion. The volume offers a comprehensive synthesis of theoretical insights, empirical research, and practical applications that together advance understanding of how language, identity, and policy intersect to shape inclusive societies. While variation in analytical depth across chapters signals opportunities for deeper critical engagement, the book's broad scope and rich case studies provide valuable foundations for future research. It is an essential resource for scholars, educators, policymakers, and practitioners committed to fostering equitable and inclusive education and social systems worldwide.

Enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in higher education through challenge-based learning

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Abstract
In this research, the Challenge-Based Learning of Algerian university STEM courses is examined. Grounded in constructivist pedagogy, ChBL engages students in applied, interdisciplinary problem-solving for motivational, engagement, and performance purposes. In a mixed-methods approach, 120 students and four teachers at two universities were assigned to experimental (ChBL) and control (lectures) conditions by random selection. Quantitative data provided significant gain for the ChBL group Engagement scores were raised from 3.2 to 4.3 on a five-point scale (p < 0.001), and performance on the last exam was 78.6% versus 68.2% for controls. Qualitative findings from interviews and focus groups were higher motivation, collaboration, and perception by students of applicability, in addition to discussion of challenges like large class sizes and institutional restrictions. Such conclusions attest to the effectiveness of ChBL in improving learning results and establishing 21st-century competencies in Algerian universities. The study recommends additional teacher training, curriculum, and policy support for long-term implementation of ChBL at the university level.

Keywords: *challenge-based learning, student engagement, academic achievement, higher education, pedagogical innovation*

Introduction

Universities are presently assailed by acute challenges of student engagement, academic attainment, and pedagogical effectiveness—especially in STEM subjects. While reform efforts have been ongoing, the majority of universities maintain conventional lecture methods that are not well integrated with skills in 21st-century learning and international employability. Such misalignment generates passive learning, high dropout rates, and weak development of students' problem-solving skills and independent learning abilities.

To address these issues, the present study explores Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) as an interdisciplinary, constructivist approach that integrates real problems, student autonomy, and interdisciplinary learning. worldwide, ChBL has demonstrated enormous ability to enhance students' motivation and performance in a variety of subjects. For instance, Swiden (2013) and López-Fernández et al. (2020) documented enormous gains in student grades and engagement in the STEM subjects following the implementation of ChBL strategies. These advantages can be attributed to the natural authenticity and personal meaning of the challenges, resulting in higher cognitive investment and sense of ownership for learning.

ChBL also promotes student agency by the capability of planning their own roles and routes in team environments. MacLeod et al. (2022) point out that ChBL students exhibit increased long-term motivation, especially where activities are project-based for individual goals and may entail shared decision-making. This aligns with growing focus on self-regulated learning (SRL) as a fundamental university and working-life competency. Zarouk et al. (2020) illustrated that flipped project-based learning (FPBL), a congruent model to CBL, significantly improved SRL among university learners, namely in the time management, goal setting, and collaboration dimensions.

Literature also shows the benefits of interdisciplinary learning. Felipe et al. (2017) and Foster and Yaoyuneyong (2014) reported that cross-disciplinary group learning experiences result in improved knowledge retention, effective communication, and employability. These findings suggest that integrating ChBL in Algerian STEM education may not only have benefits for academic outcomes but also prepare students with the competencies required to address the complexities of the contemporary working world.

Despite its potential, ChBL is not much studied in Algerian higher education. Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) offer one of the region's only empirical investigations, which indicate that ChBL facilitates student autonomy, inquiry-driven learning, and interdisciplinary studies. But they also add that institutional and logistical issues—like a lack of resources and entrenched attitudes—can hinder it.

Built on these results, this study examines the viability of ChBL application in Algerian university STEM settings through a mixed-method design. It aims to examine the effects of ChBL on students' academic performance and motivation, and to record students' and instructors' impressions of its feasibility, benefits, and limitations.

Purpose and objectives

This study investigates the implementation of Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) in Algerian higher education, focusing on STEM disciplines. The purpose is to examine its effects on student engagement, motivation, and academic performance, as well as to gather insights from students and instructors regarding its feasibility.

Significance of the study

The present study adds to the scarce empirical research on innovative teaching and learning practices within North African university education. Through an analysis of the application of ChBL in Algerian higher education, this research provides beneficial evidence regarding the viability and effectiveness of student-centered models of education where there are enormous class sizes, limited resources, and traditional education philosophies. The findings of the research have the potential to influence classroom practice, curriculum planning, and policy-making for enhancing the quality of Algerian and similar higher education.

Research questions

How does the use of ChBL affect student motivation and participation in STEM courses?

What is the impact of ChBL on the academic success of undergraduate students in STEM?

What are the perceptions of the students and teachers regarding the merits and difficulties of implementing ChBL in Algerian higher education?

2. Review of the literature

2.1 Challenge-based learning: foundations, development, and comparative perspectives

Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) is an inquiry-based, problem-oriented pedagogy model that encourages motivation and learning through real-world, cross-disciplinary challenges that require collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. As a replacement for outmoded didactic pedagogy, ChBL binds learning to relevant issues of the actual world and therefore increases relevance, interest, and academic performance—particularly fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics such as physical sciences and aerospace engineering, as supported by Swiden (2013) and López-Fernández et al. (2020). These motivational gains are often attributed to derive from the perceived legitimacy of the challenge and its alignment with students' occupational and personal aspirations.

In addition, ChBL promotes learner agency and autonomy, allowing learners to become self-directed actors of their own learning experiences. MacLeod et al. (2022) further contribute that students are encouraged to choose their roles while working in groups and co-design their learning paths, resulting in sustained motivation and increased cognitive investment. Similarly, Felipe et al. (2017) consider that the open-endedness of ChBL allows for sustained engagement by empowering learners to explore underlying content by inquiry and self-regulation.

This beneficial impact of student-centered, challenge-focused settings is common with similar pedagogical frameworks. For instance, Zarouk et al. (2020) reference that flipped project-based learning (FPBL), a highly similar model, maximally enhances self-regulated learning (SRL) in higher education by shifting the burden from teacher to learner. Further, Foster and Yaoyuneyong (2014) highlight the virtue of experiential learning integrated into CBL, referencing that integrating real-world problem-solving and reflective practice leads to deeper conceptual understanding and enhanced motivation.

Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) describe how CBL, while not yet entirely implemented in Algerian university education, has great potential to transform traditional teacher-centered models through improved motivation, self-regulated learning (SRL), and interdisciplinarity. Their mixed-methods investigation demonstrated that ChBL facilitates active learning through autonomy, relevance, and meaningful problem-solving in harmony with competency and curiosity-driven learning trends globally. The study also highlights how ChBL works within competency-based and curiosity-driven learning models through its promotion of student self-direction and intrinsic motivation. The findings indicate that students who go through ChBL demonstrate enhanced goal-setting, time management, and metacognition—precisely the competencies needed for lifelong learning and adaptability.

ChBL shares conceptual overlap with alternative progressive learning frameworks such as competency-based learning (CompBL) and curiosity-based learning (CurBL), which both offer alternative methods of building student motivation and achievement. Almendra (2019) found that students who engaged in competency-based learning modules within a pre-calculus course demonstrated improved academic performance and motivation than their counterparts in regular classrooms. CompBL's attention to mastery and self-paced instruction aligns with CBL's focus on student agency, which suggests a shared pedagogical basis.

In the same vein, curiosity-based learning (CurBL) sheds light on the potential of learning designs that place student interest at their core to foster engagement. Jackson and Ward (2012) examined the effects of CurBL on first-year students of electronics and found that it highly boosted the students' motivation, venturing self-efficacy, and consciousness of the practical application of management education. The results are in line with the results of CBL, further reinforcing the point that active, curiosity-based learning techniques prove useful in substantiating student-centered learning.

Both the competency-based and curiosity-driven models place emphasis on affective and motivational elements in the learning process—tangible aspects also seen in CBL. The two models move away from one-time content presentation toward responsive, dynamic pedagogy. The shared emphasis among the models aligns with the broader movement in educational design: a move towards practices centered on student interest first, real-world applicability, and adaptive learning pathways.

Finally, incorporating ChBL into higher education appears to foster comprehensive student growth—cognitively, emotionally, and socially. As the results of these studies show, not only are students generating increased academic achievement, but they also are becoming more adaptable, engaged, and reflective learners. Well-designed ChBL offers a powerful model for teaching students to succeed in the ambiguities of professional and civic life.

Case-based learning and problem-based learning in education

In recent years, student-centered pedagogies such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Case-Based Learning (CBL) have been growing very popular in every field of education. Both pedagogies are student-centered learning where students learn from real problems or cases to develop critical thinking, analysis, and teamwork. CBL and PBL are alternatives to traditional lecture-based instruction and are based on constructivist theories that focus on learning by experience. Although both methods share the same final goal of promoting more interaction with subject material, each offers a varied approach to achieving this goal, and their relative utility varies across disciplines.

Empirical evidence from Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) validates that challenge-based learning models stimulate motivation and independent learning for students, with improved performance and increased participation compared to traditional lecturing. Case-Based Learning (CBL) as one specific active learning method also demonstrates long-reaching benefits in improving student achievement in many types of academic settings. Literature indicates that CBL enhances students' ability to transfer knowledge to actual use, thus problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. For instance, Ciraj et al. (2010) found that the students who were in CBL scored far above tests in comparison to students taught by the conventional method of lecturing, both with improved recall of the content and greater capacity to synthesize and transfer information into actual use in real life. Specifically, Maia et al. (2023) found that students who were instructed using strongly structured, course-based cases performed higher on exams, again confirming the potential of CBL to fill the gap between theory and practice.

Beyond cognitive advantages, another considerable advantage of CBL is its potential to enhance student engagement. Sartania et al. (2022) observed that the more dynamic the CBL process, particularly when students studied cases interactively in small groups, the greater their motivation and comprehension of course content. This interactive case-based learning (cCBL) process promotes a dynamic, dynamic learning environment that increases student interest and satisfaction. Similarly, Gasim et al. (2024) elaborated that CBL supports active learning by creating a more perceived control by the students over the learning process. Overall, these are the ways in which the facilitated participation from CBL can lead to greater motivation and enhanced learning results.

Like CBL, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has been widely used to enhance the academic achievement of students and critical thinking. PBL invites students to react to tricky, poorly defined problems with no single right response, allowing them to acquire problem-solving and teamwork. Amerstorfer and von Münster-Kistner (2021) found that PBL increased academic engagement in their study, with students reporting more dedication and effort in learning through PBL compared to traditional approaches. Students in PBL are typically required to research and analyze various aspects of a problem, which enables them to have more interaction with course content. However, while PBL has been shown to increase engagement, its direct impact on academic performance has been less consistent than that of CBL since the unstructured PBL might at times yield less effective learning processes if not guided suitably.

In recent years, student-centered pedagogies such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Case-Based Learning (CBL) have been growing very popular in every field of education. Both pedagogies are student-centered learning where students learn from real problems or cases to develop critical thinking, analysis, and teamwork. Sartania et al. (2022) found that collaborative case-based learning (cCBL) increased student engagement and academic performance through improved participation and ensuring the active involvement of students in the learning process. The trend to more cooperative models in both PBL and CBL reflects an increasing recognition of the value of peer interaction in the learning process. It has also been shown through research that team or small group working can allow students to create more successful problem-solving strategies and improve critical thinking (Srinivasan et al., 2007). This. Interaction among peers raises the level of learning since the students learn from every single solution and figure to the problem.

The relationship between instructors and students is also a factor that sits at the core of the success of both CBL and PBL models. Amerstorfer and von Münster-Kistner (2021) discovered that students who perceived their instructors as communicative, credible, and supportive were engaged more in the learning process and academically performed better. This is particularly relevant in PBL, where students will likely be in the midst of the learning process, and the teacher will perform the facilitator's role instead of the traditional lecturer. Instructor-student relationship quality can also influence the extent to which students handle the increased challenges introduced by both CBL and PBL, which require greater autonomy and self-motivation in learning. Instructor feedback and the creation of a productive classroom environment are also key in facilitating student motivation and engagement in such active learning approaches.

Despite the apparent advantages of CBL and PBL, there are several challenges to their successful use. One of the biggest is time and effort in preparing and implementing these pedagogy styles. CBL, for instance, involves huge amounts of case design and preparation on the part of the instructor, which can be time-consuming. Similarly, PBL requires a lot in terms of problem design and facilitation of groups, and the absence of structure in the method can be difficult for instructors and students alike to manage effectively. Gasim et al. (2024) also remarked that large class sizes would also hamper the effectiveness of both PBL and CBL because smaller class sizes allow for greater interaction and collaboration. In a large class, it is hard to make sure that all the members are covered in the learning process.

Enhancing self-regulated learning through case-based and collaborative approaches in higher education

Case-Based Learning (CBL) is being recognized more and more for the potential it has for increasing self-regulated learning (SRL) in a number of educational settings. It has been found that CBL increases active participation and greater focused interaction with course material, which are both precursors to the development of SRL skills. CBL is particularly effective in contexts that require students to problem-solve, collaborate, and reflect on their learning experiences.

Case-based learning not only takes place in learning environments but also in professional environments. Lyons & Bandura (2020) explored how CBL would enhance SRL in workers within the context of corporate training programs. Through an integration of situated cognition and constructivist theories, the study illustrated that CBL was a feasible model for reinforcing self-regulated learning among workers individually and collectively. It facilitated greater participation, problem-solving, and reflection on learning processes, leading to improved self-regulation within the workplace. Application of CBL in such settings lends credence to the argument that CBL can be an effective and flexible vehicle to build SRL beyond the traditional academy.

Makhlouf and Rabahi's study (2025) also suggests analogy between CBL and case-based learning approaches, most importantly how situational challenges in real life increase motivation and strengthen learning. Their research corroborates the shift to active, case-based pedagogies that encourage students to think critically about content and engage interdisciplinarily.

Collaborative learning strategies, such as team-based learning (TBL) and flipped project-based learning (FPBL), have developed as powerful tools to enhance self-regulated learning. They provide learners with spaces in which they can engage in active, student-centered learning, inspiring greater responsibility for the learning process and enhancing SRL competencies.

Whittaker (2015) conducted a study to investigate the effects of team-based learning on SRL in a web-based nursing course. The results showed TBL to far surpass teacher-driven learning in fostering SRL. The TBL group reported higher rates of SRL online learning processes, such as goal-setting, time management, and self-evaluation. TBL students also performed better on exams, which suggests that the increased focus on collaboration and peer feedback served to strengthen SRL strategies. The success of TBL in nursing education proves that this is a successful strategy to promote SRL, particularly where there is a need for active engagement by the students themselves through collaboration and peer interaction.

Both TBL and FPBL highlight the importance of collaborative work in developing SRL. By employing teamwork and project-based assignments, these practices encourage reflection, peer evaluation, and the formulation of self-regulation plans. Collaborative learning environments enable learners to manage resources, set targets, and monitor their progress, all of which are essential in effective SRL. These approaches not only guarantee academic success but also prepare learners for lifelong study and professional development, where SRL is important.

Digital adaptation, skill development, and long-term learning outcomes in case- and problem-based learning

The shift toward online teaching, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has posed challenges and opportunities for the implementation of CBL and PBL. Donkin et al. (2023) conducted a scoping review of CBL online in education and indicated that while students and facilitators saw the flexibility and accessibility of online CBL positively, there were also significant challenges, including technical issues and the lack of face-to-face contact. However, the study also found that if well designed and implemented, online CBL could equal, or even exceed, face-to-face delivery in both student outcomes and engagement. This suggests that with appropriate technology infrastructure and support, online CBL might provide a valuable alternative to traditional methods of learning, especially for non-traditional students or students who are geographically distant.

Aside from academic performance, PBL and CBL are also helpful in attaining essential professional skills like problem-solving, communication, and teamwork. The real-life cases and problems encountered in such learning environments subject the students to the likelihood of turning theoretical knowledge into reality, which in professional disciplines like business, law, and engineering is of great use.For instance, in business education, students can do case studies of corporate decision-making in which they must critique various alternatives and recommend solutions based on an integration of theoretical knowledge and practical considerations. CBL and PBL allow students to learn these skills by facilitating teamwork, critical thinking, and decision-making. Also, studies have shown that students exposed to these active learning classrooms are better prepared to enter the workforce since they have acquired the ability to handle complex professional issues (Srinivasan et al., 2007).

While short-term learning gains from PBL and CBL are well established, the literature also shows that these methods result in long-term knowledge retention. Studies have established that students who are taught using active methods such as CBL and PBL remember for longer periods than students taught using passive methods such as traditional lectures. This is particularly important in those courses where knowledge application is important because such students will more readily remember and apply what they have learned when they encounter real-world problems. .
Besides, group learning through CBL and PBL encourages learners to reformulate and consolidate information by peer debate and collaborative problem-solving, which continues to promote retention.

In total, Case-Based Learning (CBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) are teaching innovations in pedagogy where the emphasis is on student-centred active learning. Both methods have been found to improve academic performance, student motivation, and professional skill development significantly. While CBL tends to provide more structured learning with immediate applicability, PBL fosters critical thinking and independent learning. The application of both approaches in collaborative groups enhances the degree of student engagement and learning, but problems relating to resource requirements and group dynamics have to be addressed. Online application of CBL and PBL is promising and challenging, with greater flexibility and accessibility in the future. Ultimately, CBL and PBL are pedagogic tools that can be utilized to enhance learning and more adequately prepare students for practice.

Interdisciplinary and collaborative learning: enhancing engagement, performance, and professional competence

As education paradigms shift towards experiential and socially relevant types of learning, interdisciplinary collaboration in Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Community-Based Learning (CBL) has emerged as an effective pedagogy for building complex skill sets and increased cognitive engagement. These pedagogies are designed not only to integrate knowledge across traditional disciplinary boundaries but also to place students in authentic, real-world problem-solving contexts. This part of the review explores interdisciplinary collaboration as a catalyst for student and scholarly growth, namely where students are learning in settings where they are being asked to integrate various visions and become active members of communities.

The implementation of interdisciplinary project-based learning (PBL) in higher education curricula has been identified as an effective strategy for preparing the employability of students. Hart (2019) study examined the use of interdisciplinary PBL in undergraduate science education and discovered that such learning is associated with measurable increases in perceived employability skills. Students working on interdisciplinary projects enhanced their problem-solving, communication, and teamwork competencies—competencies most valued by employers. The study also, though, encountered paradox: although students indicated optimism of improvement in soft skills, improvement in subject-matter knowledge was not as evident. This noted observation shows that while interdisciplinary projects are helpful to develop soft skills, their impact on subject-specific knowledge is not as straightforward. But interdisciplinary education as a means of cultivating employability skills is one of the secrets of student preparedness for the complexities of modern working life, in which interdisciplinary communication and collaboration are ever more vital.

In addition, Gnaur, Svidt, and Thygesen (2015) researched the use of interdisciplinary workshops as a method for developing teamwork competence among students within engineering education. The study has found that students who took part in a three-day workshop of interdisciplinary studies not only enhanced their technical core knowledge but also developed essential professional skills, such as teamwork and communication. The workshop's problem-based learning environment, based on real design and construction issues, created a good setting for the students to apply their teamwork and interpersonal communications skills—skills integral to the profession of engineering.

These findings concur with those of Margolies et al. (2013), that interdisciplinary PBL in large-scale studies allows students to function well in multidisciplinary teams. This ability to function across disciplines is vital in solving complicated problems in the global arena, such as those involving climate change, energy, and healthcare. Makhlouf and Rabahi's (2025) study also substantiates that CBL not only supports academic learning but also promotes employability through the simulation of co-operative real-world problems, hence connecting academic and professional practice.

In conclusion, the integration of interdisciplinary within PBL and CBL models has numerous benefits for learning and professional development among students. By shared, real-world endeavors, these instructional methods encourage central skills, which are most valuable to success in the academic environment and the workplace. As much as interdisciplinary learning may not be an immediate contributor to the attainment of discipline-specific information, its role in enabling students to gain employability skills and prepare them for the work environments of the future to be intricate and collaborative is definite. As has been established by the above-mentioned studies, interdisciplinary collaboration in schools not only enhances academic achievement but also prepares students to tackle the challenges of the 21st century.

Research methods

Sample and setting

The experiment was conducted on students and lecturers of two Algerian science faculties, the University of Saida and the University Center of Nour Bachir in El-Bayadh. The sample consisted of about 120 students who were put into two equal groups, that is, an experimental group and a control group, each containing 60 students.

In addition, four teachers were involved in the research to aid and enable the accomplishment of the research processes.

The participants were chosen based on their enrollment in relevant STEM courses during the academic semester on which the study was being carried out. The two universities provided multicultural learning environments, and therefore their involvement contributed to the reliability and generalizability of the findings. They were explained the purpose and nature of the study prior to recruiting participants, and ethical standards were properly followed to ensure voluntary and confidential participation.

Table 1. University and participant breakdown

University	Students (ChBL)	Students (control)	Instructors
University of Saida	30	30	2
University Center of Nour Bachir, El-Bayadh	30	30	2

Source: Authors' data collection, 2024

CBL module design and implementation

The CBL intervention spans 6 weeks and includes:

Week 1: Introduction to the Big Idea (e.g., energy efficiency, water sustainability) Instructors introduced the overarching theme and explained the ChBL process.

Week 2: Formulation of essential and guiding questions (Students formulated essential and guiding questions in small groups).

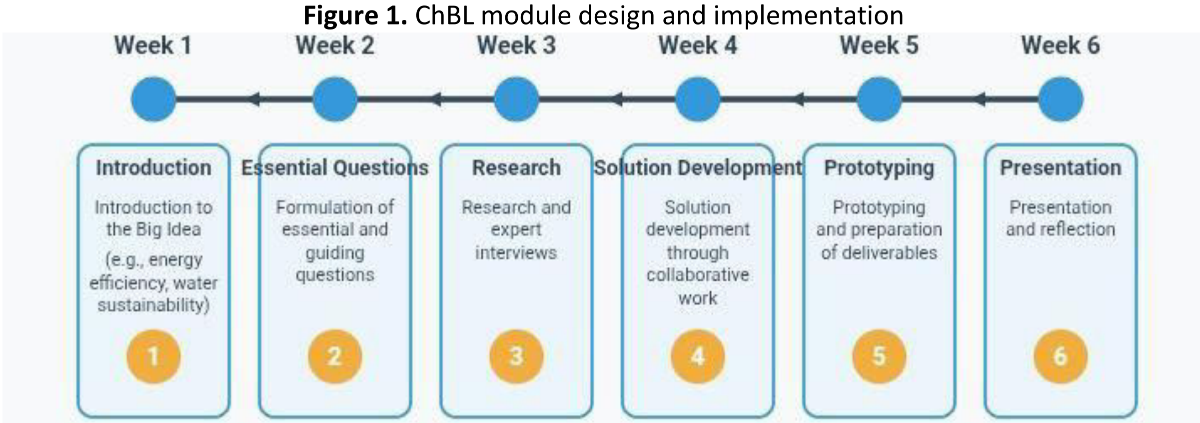
Week 3: Research and expert interviews (Research activities were conducted, including interviews with experts from engineering and environmental studies.)

Week 4: Solution development through collaborative work (Teams collaborated to propose innovative solutions, using digital tools (Padlet, Google Docs) for co-creation.)

Week 5: Prototyping and preparation of deliverables (Prototypes and presentations were prepared.)

Week 6: Presentation and reflection (Final presentations were delivered, followed by reflective discussions.)

Figure 1. ChBL module design and implementation



Source: Field data, 2024

Data collection instruments

Various instruments were used throughout the course of this study to ensure thorough data gathering and triangulation of results, focus group discussions, and classroom observation checklists) (see Appendices A, B, C). Instruments used here ensured that qualitative and quantitative dimensions of student engagement and academic performance were captured. Such instruments included:

Pre- and post-intervention student engagement surveys: Students completed pre- and post-intervention student engagement surveys based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The surveys evaluated a number of different dimensions of academic engagement, including participation, interest, time on task, and perceived relevance of learning activity.

Academic performance scores: Midterm and final exam scores were collected from the control and experimental groups. The scores provided a quantitative measure of student achievement and allowed for academic performance comparisons pre- and post-intervention.

Semi-structured interview guides: A subsample of the teachers and students was subjected to in-depth interviews about their attitudes, experiences, and reflection about intervention.

The semi-structured format allows for the possibility of consistency across interviews while allowing participants a chance to elaborate on individual insights.

Focus group protocol: participants were chosen from every group, focus group discussions were conducted to determine shared experiences and attitudes. The protocols was designed to promote discussion and examine engagement, challenges, and perceived effect of the instructional approaches implemented.

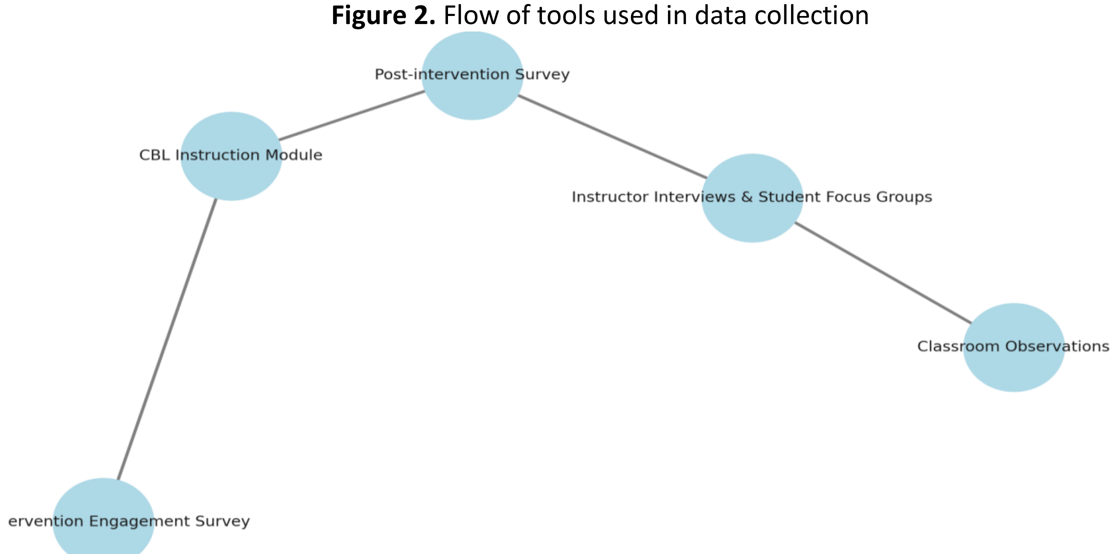
Classroom observation checklists: Trained observers used a structured observation tool to note student behaviors, instructor strategies, and classroom dynamics during the intervention sessions. The checklist provided a systematic way of assessing observable signs of engagement and instructional fidelity across sessions.

All instruments were reviewed by experts in education research for reliability and validity. Data collected with the instruments were subsequently analyzed to establish the efficacy of the intervention and its effects on student engagement and academic performance.

Table 2. Instruments for data collection

Instrument type	Target group	Purpose
Engagement survey	Students	Measure engagement pre- and post-intervention
Academic performance scores	Students	Assess learning outcomes
Interview guide	Instructors	Explore implementation experiences
Focus group protocol	Students	Gather feedback and perceptions
Observation checklist	Researchers	Evaluate classroom interactions

Figure 2. Flow of tools used in data collection



This flowchart illustrates graphically the data collection timeline and sequence, from pre-intervention baseline through post-intervention assessments.

Step 1: Pre-intervention engagement survey administration
Step 2: Administer ChBL instruction module
Step 3: Administer post-intervention survey
Step 4: Administer interviews and focus groups
Step 5: Conduct classroom observations

Data collection and analysis

Quantitative data collection and analysis

Quantitative data were collected through academic assessment scores and formalized survey answers administered prior to and following the intervention. These sources provided measurable data regarding student engagement and academic performance in experimental and control groups.

Analysis began with the application of descriptive statistical processes like computing means, medians, and standard deviations to summarize the dataset's central tendency and variability. To determine the statistical significance of observed differences, inferential statistical tests were conducted. Specifically:

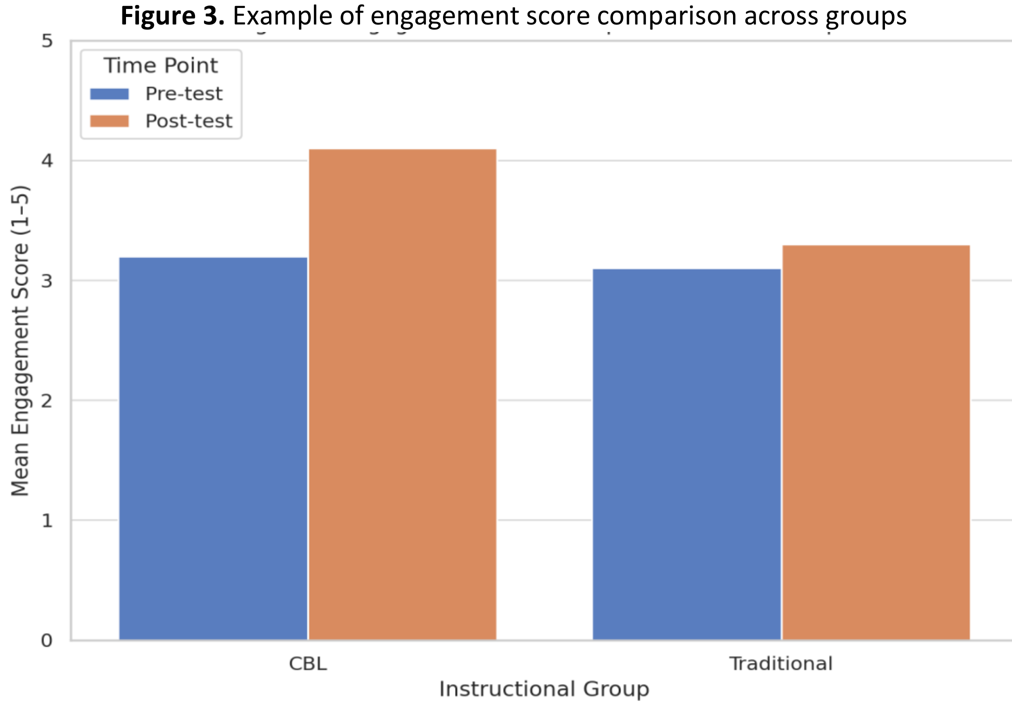
• Paired-sample t-tests were used in comparing pre- and post-intervention scores within groups to analyze the effect of the intervention on individual-level change over time.

• Independent-sample t-tests were used to make comparisons between the experimental and control groups' post-intervention results.

• One-way ANOVA was utilized to look for differences between multiple subgroups where applicable, e.g., between different academic programs or instructor groups, to see whether any larger patterns or interactions were present.

Statistical tests were all performed on SPSS Statistics (Version 30) with a level of significance $p < 0.05$. The findings from this quantitative analysis were used to support and validate the qualitative findings gathered in parallel.

Figure 3. Example of engagement score comparison across groups



This bar graph compares the ChBL and control (traditional instruction) groups' mean engagement scores pre- and post-intervention.

- ✓ The instructional method was represented on the X-axis, dividing the ChBL and Traditional groups.
- ✓ The mean engagement score from pre- and post-intervention survey data was represented on the Y-axis.
- ✓ Two bars were plotted for each instructional method to represent pre-test and post-test engagement levels. This graphical comparison permitted an explicit examination of the change over time in student engagement for each group and depicted the differential impact of the instructional approaches.

Collection and analysis of qualitative data

Qualitative data were obtained through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled students and teachers in the experimental and control groups. These data provided in-depth information on participants' perceptions about the instructional approach, learning process, and contextual factors influencing participation. Data were transcribed and analyzed in a thematic analysis framework, following the six-phase model described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Analysis began with familiarization to the data, and then initial codes were developed systematically across the dataset. A coding framework was developed to guide the analysis. Initial codes were then synthesized into higher-order themes reflecting main dimensions of the learning experience, including:

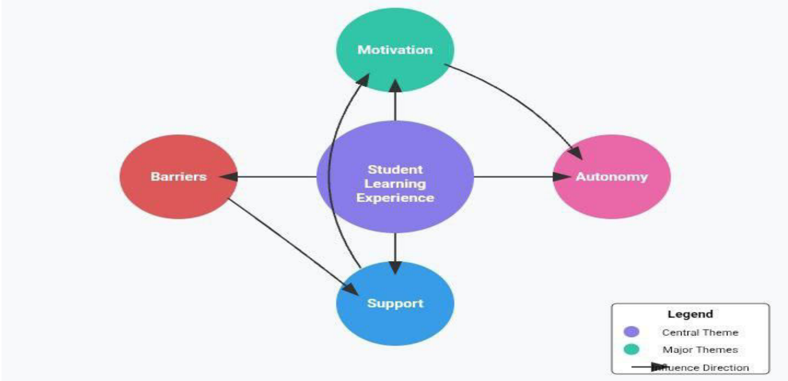
- ✓ Motivation and student engagement
- ✓ Relevance of course content
- ✓ Teaching approach (ChBL or traditional)
- ✓ School and organization environment Thematization was cross-tabulated and incrementally elaborated for cohesiveness and typicality, creating a rich, contextual insight into the activities of the participants and the impact of the intervention.

Table 3. Sample coding categories and themes

Code label	Description	Example quote
Student agency	Learners' ownership of learning process	"We chose what mattered to us."
Institutional barriers	Administrative challenges	"Time constraints and heavy curriculum..."

The table provides illustrative codes from qualitative interviews, their explanations, and quotes from the students that exemplify dominant key patterns.

Figure 4. Thematic map of ChBL experience from students' perspective



This diagram delineates the interrelated themes emerging from student narratives. It indicates how support, motivation, and perceived relevance are connected to the effectiveness of the ChBL approach. • Central node: "Student Learning Experience" • Linked nodes: "Motivation", "Autonomy", "Barriers", "Support" • Arrows: Indicate flow of influence and interaction Ethical Considerations Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee prior to the commencement of the study. Procedures followed standard ethical practice for research with human participants.

The participants were given the complete information regarding the aim, scope, and procedure of the research and voluntarily provided their informed consent to be a part of it. They were distinctly told that they had every right to withdraw from the research at any point without any penalty.

To protect the privacy of the participants, all data were collected and processed in terms of anonymity and confidentiality. Identifying data were removed or encoded so that individual responses could not be traced back to specific participants.

Voluntary consent was maintained, and coercion or undue influence was not used. All data were stored in secure password-protected electronic files and locked physical storage that had restricted access for the principal investigators only. They were used to impart ethical integrity to the research.

Limitations and mitigation strategies

There were certain restrictions that were recognized in study design and study execution. However, countermeasures were taken to maintain their scope of affecting the validity and reliability of the results to the bare minimum:

1. Limited generalizability due to sample size: Although comparatively few students were taken from two Algerian schools, triangulation between the schools made the results more representative. Having similar findings in both locations allowed the effects of the intervention across different school settings to be more comprehended.
2. Inconsistency in instructor training: Variation among instructors in exposure to Case-Based Learning (CBL) was a risk to uniform implementation. A risk-reduction standardized workshop on the ChBL approach was offered prior to the intervention. The workshop addressed the construction of a common conceptualization of ChBL principle and practice among participating instructors.
3. Institutional resistance to pedagogical innovation: To anticipate and prepare for potential resistance to pedagogy innovation, administrative stakeholders were involved early in the planning process. Consultation institutionalized support, enabled logistical arrangements, and generated a disposition towards innovation in education.

Results and discussion

Discussion and presentation of the findings of the study are done in direct answer to the research questions and hypotheses posed. The quantitative data were processed to examine the effects of Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) on the motivation and academic achievement of Algerian STEM university students, and the opinions of the students and teachers regarding implementation of CBL. Results are set against the backdrop of previous work, with specific reference made to Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) and other relevant work referred to in the literature review.

Research Question 1:

To what extent does the implementation of Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) affect student engagement in Algerian STEM university classrooms?

Student engagement analysis survey revealed statistically significant greater engagement among students who underwent the ChBL module compared to students who listened to conventional lectures. The score for engagement by the ChBL group had a mean of 4.3 (on a 5-point Likert scale), whereas the control group's score was 3.1. The difference was significant statistically ($t(148) = 7.84$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that ChBL is a good means of improving students' activity levels in activities geared towards learning.

Table 4. Student engagement scores (pre- and post-test)

Group	Pre-test mean (SD)	Post-test mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
ChBL (Experimental)	3.2 (0.6)	4.3 (0.5)	7.84	<0.001
Control (Traditional)	3.1 (0.7)	3.1 (0.6)	0.42	0.674

This evidence is in agreement with Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025), who demonstrated ChBL promotes active learning on the basis of autonomy, relevance, and meaningful problem-solving crucial drivers to engagement. The constructivist nature of ChBL promotes a learner-directed environment, which contrasts with the passive receipt of the standard lecture. Second, the increase in engagement would be consistent with international literature where ChBL would be seen to foster curiosity and intrinsic motivation (Jackson & Ward, 2012).

This improved engagement can also be explained through the creation of self-regulated learning (SRL) skills, as put forth by Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025), where students become more responsible for learning by setting goals and regulating tasks. This aligns with the theoretical framework of engagement as multidimensional in nature, including behavior, emotion, and cognition—each of which is addressed through ChBL strategies.

Research Question 2:

How does ChBL influence students' academic performance compared to traditional lecture-based methods?

Academic performance, measured as final examination results and assignment marks, showed a statistically significant advantage for the ChBL group. The mean final examination mark for the ChBL group was 78.6% versus 68.2% for the control group ($t(148) = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$). Assignment marks for the ChBL group also evidenced more frequent higher-order thinking, as categorized by Bloom's taxonomy.

Table 5. Academic performance comparison (exams and assignments)

Group	Midterm mean (%)	Final exam mean (%)	Assignment quality (Bloom's level)
ChBL (experimental)	72.4	78.6	More frequent higher-order analysis
Control (traditional)	69.1	68.2	Mostly recall and comprehension

The better performance in academics among the ChBL group supports the hypothesis that problem-centered, engaging learning enhances retention and application of learning. These observations are consistent with Almendra (2019), whose research found better academic performance in competency-based modules, which have pedagogical similarities to CBL.

Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) point out that ChBL encourages competency development and inquiry learning, enabling students not only to learn theoretical content but also to apply it successfully in real contexts. This outcome evidences CBL's twin emphasis on cognitive and metacognitive skill development, preparing students for complex problem-solving outside of the classroom.

Moreover, the learning of SRL skills—goal setting, time management, and self-monitoring—in relation to ChBL is very likely to lead to increased academic performance because students become increasingly autonomous in monitoring their learning process (Whittaker, 2015).

Research Question 3:

What are the perceptions of instructors and students regarding the effectiveness and challenges of ChBL in Algerian universities?

Students and instructors survey results showed overall positive sentiments regarding the effectiveness of ChBL. Approximately 82% of students agreed that ChBL rendered learning more interesting and relevant. Similarly, 75% of teachers reported observing increased student motivation and collaboration. However, 68% of instructors also admitted that there were major challenges, including large class sizes, few resources, and institutional inadequacy of support.

Table 6. Student and instructor perceptions of ChBL

Respondents	Positive perceptions (%)	Reported challenges (%)
Students	82	28
Instructors	75	68

The very strong positive impressions align with Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025), who found that ChBL increases learner autonomy and motivation. The intrinsic motivation that the ChBL fosters is valued by both learners and teachers, who view it as a method of developing vital 21st-century skills. But the problems cited by respondents do reflect a realistic picture of the application of new pedagogies in Algerian higher education. Internal constraints such as inadequate training, poor technology infrastructure, and rigidness in curricula structures were common barriers, consistent with broader concerns in educational reform literature (Almendra, 2019).

These results indicate that despite ChBL being pedagogically valid and popular, systemic transformation is needed for scalable and sustainable adoption. Faculty development activities, administration support, and allocation of resources need to be addressed to bypass logistical barriers.

Makhlouf and Rabahi's (2025) research offers a key point of comparison when seeking to understand the outcomes of the current research. Their mixed-methods approach established the efficiency of ChBL in transforming Algerian higher education by:

- Greater learner motivation through active, problem-based learning.
- Facilitating self-directed learning conduct.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and applied relevance.

Quantitative results of the present study support these results, providing empirical evidence that ChBL increases engagement and academic success in Algerian STEM education. The coincidence between student and teacher perceptions and those of Makhlouf and Rabahi (2025) supports the applied usability of ChBL even in the presence of context issues.

Table 7. Summary of quantitative findings

Research question	Quantitative result summary	Statistical significance
1. Effect of ChBL on engagement	Mean engagement 4.3 vs. 3.1 (Control)	$p < 0.001$

2. Effect of ChBL on academic performance	Exam score 78.6% vs. 68.2% (Control)	$p < 0.001$
3. Perceptions of ChBL effectiveness and challenges	82% students positive, 75% instructors positive; 68% note barriers	Descriptive

Generally, the findings indicate that although ChBL has a viable and efficient method towards increased learning achievement in Algeria, it is dependent on systemic change. It requires adherence to continued professional development, curriculum flexibility, and cultural change toward inquiry, student-centered learning.

Conclusion

This study verifies that Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) has a positive and significant impact on learner motivation, learning attitude, and academic performance in Algerian STEM higher education. Not only were the learners in the experimental class more motivated and engaged, but even their academic scores were better compared to learners who took regular lecture-based classes. Both students and teachers appreciated the authenticity of activities and the opportunities for collaboration, even under the limitations of class size, resource shortages, and institutionally deficient support.

These results suggest the pedagogical value of ChBL as student-centered pedagogy to complement the traditional pedagogy in Algerian universities. By connecting coursework with real-world problems, ChBL reasserts autonomy, collaboration, and higher-order thinking—21st-century abilities necessary to compete. The study also suggests, however, that institutional and logistical issues must be overcome before the large-scale sustainable application of ChBL.

The evidence points to a number of practical steps. First, instructor professional development must be used to educate instructors with ChBL competencies and strong facilitation techniques. Second, curriculum change must be achieved so that space for integration of ChBL principles into STEM courses may exist without increasing existing course loads. Last, institutional and policy support must be enhanced through resource availability, innovation promotion, and active-learning pedagogies incentivization. Finally, but no less importantly, future research needs to consider long-term effects of ChBL on employability skills and professional readiness.

Therefore, to conclude, ChBL is an open doorway through which Algerian higher education can be shifted from the conventional lecturing method to an active, student-centered, and prospective system of learning. To interpret these findings into actionable practices, the following recommendations are suggested to support the effective implementation of Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) in Algerian universities.

Professional Development: Implement comprehensive teacher training programs to develop necessary capacities and competencies to teach using ChBL.

Curriculum Integration: Restructure curricula to adopt the values of ChBL, especially their integration with learning outcomes and assessment design.

Institutional Support: Allocate funds and develop infrastructural provisions for enabling ChBL strategy activation.

Policy Framework: Develop policies that encourage and reward innovative pedagogies, including the enablement of ChBL.

Future Research: Conduct longitudinal research to evaluate ChBL's long-term impact on student performance and institutional success.

By implementing ChBL, Algerian institutions of higher learning can build a more interactive, meaningful, and effective learning process that will prepare the students for challenges of the modern age.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Sample interview protocol (students and instructors)

Introductory questions:

1. Can you share your experience with the six-week Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) module?
2. How was ChBL a departure from your normal classroom experience?

Core questions:

3. What was most exciting about ChBL?
4. How did working in groups and teams impact your learning?
5. What were some of the challenges you faced through the ChBL process?
6. For instructors: How did you adjust instruction to accommodate ChBL?

Closing question:

7. Would you recommend the use of ChBL in other classes? Why or why not?

Appendix B. Classroom observation checklist

Focus of observation	**Yes/No**	**Examples notes**
Students working actively in groups		
Presence of teamwork and collaboration		
Guiding questions utilized in activities		
Use of real-life problems in tasks		
Instructor facilitating instead of lecturing		
Student engagement cues (enthusiasm, attention)		

(Observers tick "Yes/No" and provide examples. This tool ensured systematic observation of classroom dynamics.)

Appendix C. Sample guiding questions (week 2 activity)

Big idea: Energy Efficiency in Everyday Life

Essential question: How can energy be more efficiently used in our community?

Guiding questions:

1. What are the main sources of energy consumption at home, university, or public spaces?

2. What technologies or practices can reduce energy wastage?
3. What are the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in energy efficiency?
4. How can students encourage sustainable energy use awareness?

(Students developed comparable guiding inquiries in cooperation with instructor facilitation.)

The use of AI tools in the EFL classroom: teachers' perspectives

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Abstract
As AI gains momentum across all areas of life, more and more educators are implementing it in their classes. Due to its novelty, teachers are cautious about its use in class. Issues such as academic integrity and data privacy are the main factors that deter many teachers from utilizing AI tools. On the other hand, these are time-saving tools that facilitate the creation of lesson materials. The Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia is following this trend and preparing primary schools to integrate AI into the national curricula starting in the 2025-2026 academic year. The aim of the study is to investigate teachers' perspectives on the usage of AI tools in English classes in primary schools in North Macedonia, their preparedness for implementation of AI in the English curricula, and to explore the correlation between teachers' use of AI tools in the classroom and teaching their students about AI-related ethical issues. A survey research design was adopted, and a questionnaire was used to gain insight into teachers' opinions. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a Pearson correlation test. Results show that teachers sometimes use AI tools in class or for generating teaching materials, with ChatGPT and Canva being the most preferred tools. They do not use AI for providing written feedback. Those who do not support their use believe that AI tools decrease students' creativity and promote dependence on technology. Professional training should be organized by the Ministry to prepare teachers for effective and ethical usage of AI-powered tools to prevent data privacy issues and academic dishonesty.

Keywords: *AI Tools, EFL Classroom, teachers' perspectives, primary schools, national curricula, professional development*

Introduction

The possibilities for implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in language education have captured significant attention worldwide over the last two years. The latest project of the European Center for Modern Languages (ECML), "AI for Language Education, 2024-2027," investigates the effective usage and ethical aspects of AI technology in language teaching. It explores how AI tools can assist instructors with lesson planning, material design, and providing instant feedback and assessment (Meristo, 2025). In the context of North Macedonia, English teachers are beginning to follow this trend as a way of enhancing language acquisition while rethinking traditional teaching methodologies. The use of AI in EFL classes is still in its initial stages due to different attitudes and concerns among educators. At one end of the continuum are those who regard AI tools as disruptors or creativity destroyers, while at the other end are teachers who see these intelligent systems as game changers, assistants, and allies. Many teachers adopt a middle position, as they are aware of both the advantages and disadvantages. More research on the effective use of AI tools would support teachers in their decision-making processes. The Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia has announced the commencement of the process to integrate AI into primary school curricula in the 2025-2026 academic year (SAKAMDAKAŽAM.MK, 18.07.2025). This article explores teachers' preparedness and perspectives on the implementation of AI tools in English classes in state primary schools in North Macedonia and examines the correlation between teachers' attitudes and their experience with AI in the language classroom. The focus is on how AI can facilitate lesson preparation, particularly in material design. The review of existing literature provides insights into the different facets of AI use in language education. While machine-learning tools may offer teachers instant support, their use also raises concerns about academic integrity and data privacy. It is therefore crucial for teachers to recognize their responsibility in safeguarding both their own and their students' information.

Theoretical background

AI-powered tools represent a recent trend in foreign language education. They can be classified into three main categories: (1) student-centered; (2) teacher-focused; and (3) AI tools used by institutions (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022: 9). According to Son et al. (2023), recent studies on AI tools in education explore seven categories of AI usage in language education: natural language processing (NLP), data-driven learning (DDL), automated writing evaluation (AWE), computerized dynamic assessment (CDA), intelligent tutoring systems (ITSs), automatic speech recognition (ASR), and chatbots (Son et al., 2023: 2). This article explores the teacher-centered tools, which often overlap with those intended for students. These include generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, or Google Gemini) and AI-powered online platforms (Twee and MagicSchool) that can be used as AI teaching assistants.

While the categorization of AI-powered systems serves as a theoretical background, language teachers benefit most from the practical functions of these tools in the classroom. AI tools have four significant functions: enhancing teaching and learning, tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs, advancing language assessment and evaluation, and predicting potential challenges early on (Kwid et al., 2024). Specifically, AI tools support EFL teachers in three main areas: automation of administrative tasks, personalization of the learning experience, and information on students' learning progress (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019: 112). Research indicates that these tools can personalize textbook learning materials, design vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation activities, facilitate formative assessment with instant feedback, and increase students' motivation for class participation (Jomaa et al., 2025; Hazaymeh et al., 2024; Schmidt & Strassner, 2022; Pokrivcakova, 2019).

The British Council conducted a survey with 1,348 experienced English language teachers from 118 countries. The results show that the most commonly used AI tools are language learning apps (48%) followed by language generation AI, chatbots, automated grading, speech recognition software, text-to-speech tools, data and learning analytics tools, virtual and augmented reality tools (7%). It is important to note that 24% of the respondents said they did not use any AI tools in their teaching. Regarding the tasks for which they utilize AI tools, 82% of the teachers use them for the following tasks: to create materials (57%), to help students practice their English (53%), to create lesson plans (43%), to do error correction (33%), to grade or assess their students (23%), and to do admin tasks (19%) (Edmett et al., 2024: 30-31). Concerning teachers' views on AI in English Language Teaching, teachers are optimistic about the use of AI as a supplementary tool, but they are concerned about over-dependence on technology, reduced human interaction, and the inability of AI to comprehend the subtle nature of language and the interdependence between language and culture. Although some teachers are uncertain about the impact of AI on ELT, they all agree that AI tools can only complement and not replace human teachers. Finally, a major concern among EFL teachers is the lack of formal training that would prepare them for more efficient AI integration into their EFL classes.

Several studies also discuss teachers' opinions about the disadvantage of AI tools (Meristo, 2025; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Hazaymeh et al., 2024; Erbaş, 2023). These include the production of biased outputs, potential for plagiarism and unethical usage, compromising privacy rights, and lack of adequate training, which can cause underusage or misuses of AI resources. Following the rapid rise of AI tools in (language) education, 'academic integrity', 'data privacy', and 'ethical issues' have become increasingly popular terms. Academic integrity refers to students' honesty and responsibility in their work. It ensures that students' assignments genuinely reflect their own understanding and efforts (Barratt, 2013; Ateeq et al., 2024). The main risk of allowing the use of AI tools in the classroom is enabling students to generate assignments dishonestly using Ai chatbots such as ChatGPT, Copilot, or Gemini, or essay generators (Elom et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023; Navarro-Dolmestch, 2023).

Data privacy in education encompasses safeguarding personal information collected in educational settings from unauthorized access or misuse (Secure and reliable use of education data zone, 2021). The information covers sensitive personal data such as names, date of birth, ID number, academic records, attendance, health details, social interaction, and other online activities. Multiple stakeholders are involved in the process of how personal data is collected, stored, used, and shared, including teachers, students, parents, and educational institutions (Aloshi & Ismail, 2025). The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) emphasizes the principles of lawfulness, fairness, transparency, and data minimization (European Union, 2016). Research shows that educational authorities and teachers lack training on AI and data privacy, which undermines the need for investing in teacher education and incorporating data literacy into curricula (Aloshi & Ismail, 2025; Miao et al., 2024).

AI-related ethical issues in the EFL classroom include data breach, exposure of minor's sensitive information, misuse of AI-powered tool to complete assignments without genuine learning, and use of biased AI assessment tools (World Economic Forum, 2025). Therefore, there is a pressing need for educational institutions to establish clear policies on academic integrity and data privacy in order to promote ethical usage of AI in education. Training sessions for educators should be organized to raise their awareness of the risks and limitations of adopting these technologies. This would support teachers to develop students' digital literacy skills by educating them about the ethical use of AI tools and critical evaluation of AI-generated information (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Pokrivcakova, 2019).

The literature review highlights key issues that inform and guide the focus of this study. AI tools are used by many EFL teachers in North Macedonia, and they, too, encounter similar issues as teachers worldwide. They lack AI literacy training and are neutral about the usage and effectiveness of AI tools in foreign language education. The study investigates teachers' perspectives on the practical use of AI tools in EFL classes, the benefits and challenges of their implementation, and the ethical aspect of AI usage. Thus, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions and the hypothesis:

1. How often and for which specific purpose do primary school EFL teachers integrate AI tools into their lesson plans and the creation of teaching materials?
2. What are the benefits and challenges faced by primary school EFL teachers when using AI tools in the classroom?
3. To what extent do primary school English teachers incorporate education on academic integrity and data privacy usage of AI tools in their classrooms?

Hypothesis no. 1: There is a correlation between the extent of teachers' use AI tools and the degree to which they educate their students about academic integrity ethical issues.

Hypothesis no. 2: There is a correlation between the extent of teachers' use AI tools and the degree to which they educate their students about data privacy.

The findings are expected to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature, which is scarce in the context of North Macedonia, and to provide insight into primary school EFL teachers' concerns and readiness for the introduction of AI into language education. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development of Education are the main stakeholders who would greatly benefit from the study results as they could serve them as preliminary insight into teachers' perspectives on the use of AI in the classroom.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research method with a survey research design. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from EFL teachers teaching in state primary schools.

This method was chosen because of its effectiveness in collecting quantifiable data from a defined population within a short period. The structured questionnaire ensured comparability of responses and reliable measurement of variables related to the research questions, Finally, the approach minimizes researcher bias and permits replication in future studies, thus increasing the validity and reliability of the results (Leavy, 2022; Gurzynski-Weiss & Kim, 2022).

Participants

The study employed a purposive sampling method to select participants who could provide relevant data in accordance with the research objectives. This non-probabilistic sampling technique was selected because the study aimed to explore the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers in North Macedonia working specifically in state primary schools. The inclusion criteria required participants to work in primary schools and be engaged in professional development activities, to ensure their perspectives reflected current EFL classroom practices and trends.

Twenty English teachers were recruited during an ELT conference organized by the English Language Teachers' Association of North Macedonia, held in Skopje on 25th and 26th October, 2024. The teachers voluntarily participated in the survey. There were 150 conference attendees, coming from various state and private primary and secondary schools, private language schools, and state and private universities in North Macedonia. Only those teaching in primary schools were given the questionnaire. The setting facilitated access to a specialized group of teachers who were likely more motivated to contribute meaningfully. The participation in the conference was voluntary, so it may be assumed that the teachers who decided to attend it were either knowledgeable to varying degrees about AI or were willing to learn more about it. Including teachers who are not interested in the use of AI could skew the results as their responses would likely be negative or left blank. Although the sample size is small for quantitative research, the purposive sampling allowed for a more insightful initial exploration of teachers' attitudes within the targeted population. The limitations of this approach, including the sample size and selection setting, are discussed in detail in the limitations section.

Instruments

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from teachers. The survey questions were designed based on the researcher's preconceptions. The questionnaire comprised 13 items: five yes-no questions, five open-ended, and three Likert-scale questions (see Appendix). These were organized into three thematic sections corresponding to each of our research questions and the hypothesis. The first set of items referred to teachers' experiences with the use of AI tools, with particular focus on teacher-centered tools (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022); the second group of questions examined their perceived benefits and drawbacks; and the last three queries assessed teachers' awareness of the ethical considerations in using AI tools within EFL classrooms, which provided data for testing the two hypotheses.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was distributed among the participants while they were attending a workshop on AI tools at a conference in Skopje, North Macedonia. Completing the questionnaire was done voluntarily and anonymously. The answers were entered manually in an Excel sheet. A Pearson correlation test was run in SPSS using the data that had been imported from the Excel sheet to establish possible correlation between the extent to which teachers implement AI tools in their classroom and student education on ethical issues arising from AI usage — academic integrity and data privacy. Descriptive statistics was employed to describe the mean scores, frequencies and percentages, which enabled the researcher to provide answers to the research questions.

Results and discussion

The descriptive statistics for each question are shown below. As Figure 1 indicates, 70% of the teachers utilize AI tools for their English classes. The majority of those teachers sometimes use AI tools to prepare teaching materials, as outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Do you use AI tools for your English classes?

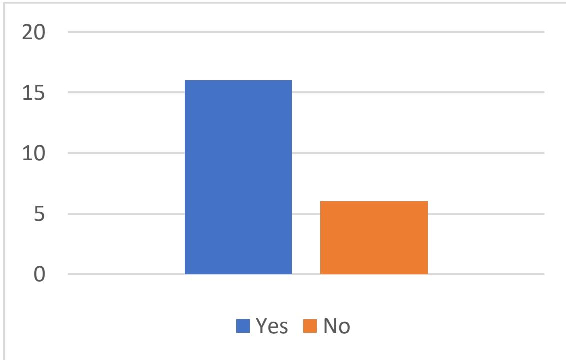
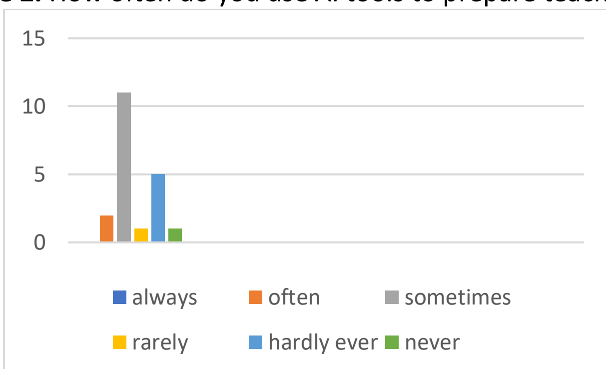


Figure 2. How often do you use AI tools to prepare teaching materials?



Regarding the usage of AI tools during classes, they are not used as frequently as for lesson preparation. Namely, as can be seen in Figure 3, half of the teachers never use AI tools in class, and only approximately 25% rarely or sometimes use them.

Figure 3. How often do you use AI tools during your classes?

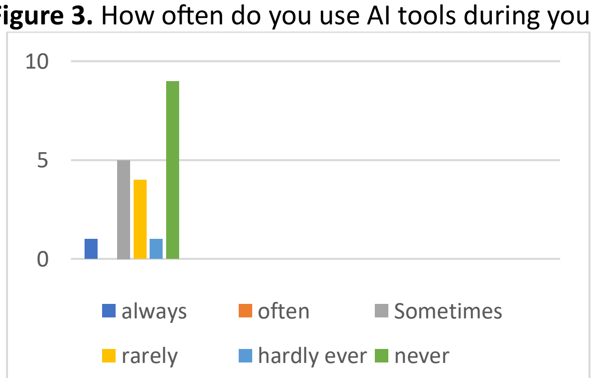
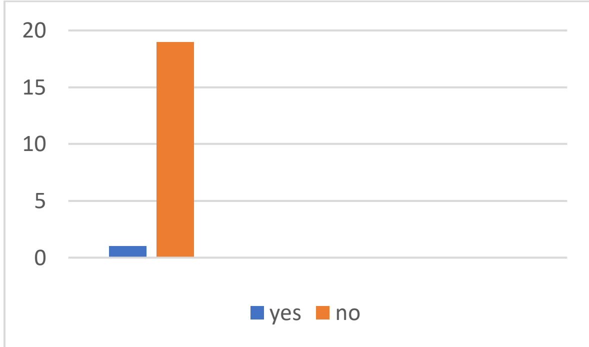


Figure 4. Do you use AI tools to provide written feedback on students' writing assignments?



According to Figure 4, only one teacher relies on AI tools to provide written feedback on students' writing assignments, but she rarely uses them, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. How often do you use AI tools to provide written feedback on students' writing assignments?

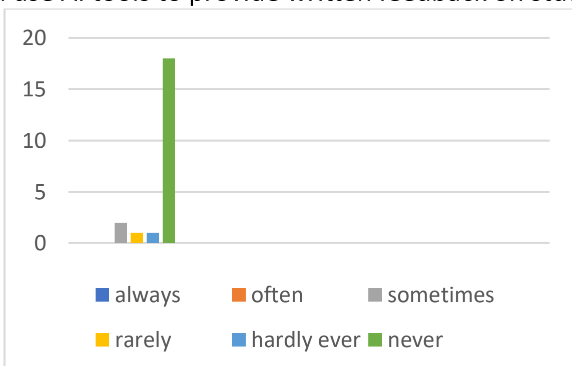
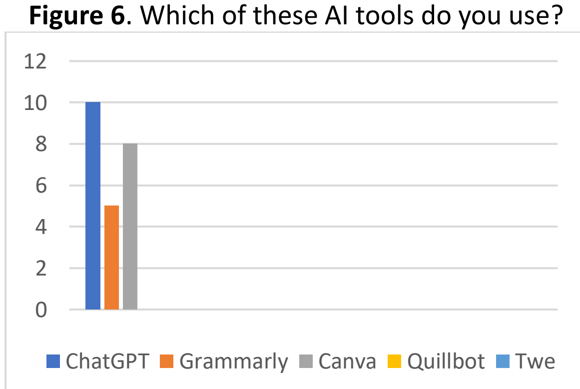


Figure 6. Which of these AI tools do you use?



Concerning particular AI tools, the most frequently used tool is ChatGPT, followed by Canva and Grammarly. Other AI-powered tools that the teachers suggested were Kahoot, MagicSchool, StoryJumper and Quizizz.

The greatest advantage for teachers using AI tools is that they save teachers time for preparing their lesson materials, followed by support for creating interesting and engaging classes. However, teachers listed several disadvantages, the greatest one being destruction of both students' and teachers' creativity and critical thinking skills, followed by technology over-reliance and data privacy issues. All teachers agreed on the artificial nature of the generated content and the fact that teachers can never be replaced by AI tools.

With regard to how students benefit from using AI tools in their English classes, most teachers believe that the instant feedback, increased motivation, class engagement and personalization of students' learning enhance the language learning experience.

The next two questions were related to the ethical aspect of AI tools. Less than half of the teachers (40%) educate their students about academic integrity when using AI tools (see Figure 7 below), but 65% of the EFL teachers teach them about data privacy issues, as presented in Figure 8.

Figure 7. Do you teach your students about academic integrity when using AI tools?

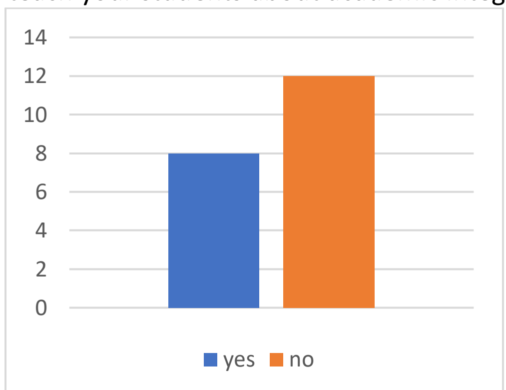
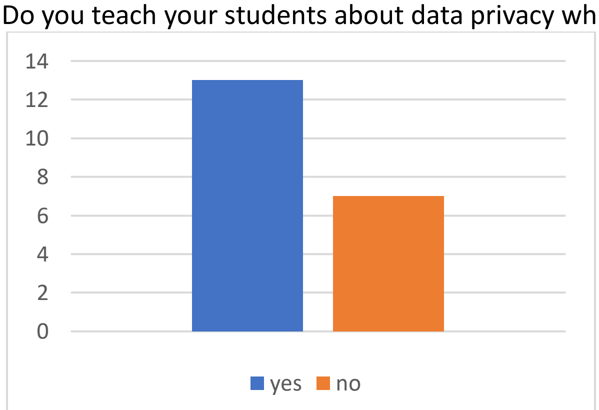


Figure 8. Do you teach your students about data privacy when using AI tools?



The final question referred to professional development sessions attended by the EFL teachers. Only 3 out of 20 teachers responded affirmatively.

A Pearson correlation test was conducted to test Hypothesis no.1 and to examine the relationship between teachers who reported using AI tools and those who teach their students about academic integrity when using such tools. The hypothesis was confirmed as the relationship was statistically significant, $r = .22$, $p < .0005$, indicating a low positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that the educators who utilize AI tools more often are more likely to teach their students about ethical issues related to academic integrity. Another Pearson correlation test was run to test Hypothesis no.2 and study the correlation between EFL teachers who use AI tools and those who educate their students about data privacy. This hypothesis was confirmed as well. The relationship is statistically significant, $r = .35$, $p < .0005$, and demonstrates that teachers who use AI have a higher tendency to inform students about data privacy issues. Although the positive correlations are weak for both hypotheses and do not imply causation, they emphasize the importance of adopting AI technology in education and addressing the ethical aspects of its use.

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of primary school EFL teachers with the implementation of AI tools in English classes, including the advantages, disadvantages, and ethical implications of AI usage. The findings illustrate the frequency and types of tools use by EFL teachers both inside and outside the classroom, their primary purposes, the benefits and challenges, and the identified need for training on the ethical aspects of AI use in the classroom. In general, EFL teachers show little resistance to AI integration in the curricula. Nevertheless, they prefer teacher-centered AI tools, and indicate the need for comprehensive training on how to adopt these new and innovative technologies while offering them sufficient knowledge on academic integrity and data protection.

Regarding teachers' usage of AI tools, more than two thirds of the respondents utilize them, which indicates that educators are familiar with these tools and recognize their potential. However, the frequency is low, as most teachers sometimes decide to use them to prepare lesson materials. Furthermore, a small number of teachers decide to implement them in classes, and they rarely do that. This suggests that issues such as institutional policies, privacy, academic dishonesty, and insufficient training may discourage teachers to use AI tools with their students.

Those who decide to use AI tools listed different types of platforms and applications, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Canva, Kahoot, MagicSchool, StoryJumper and Quizizz. The wide range of services these tools offer implies that teachers use them for various purposes and with different ages. They use them to design texts, exercises, vocabulary activities, games, stories, tests, and quizzes. Nevertheless, AI tools are not used for providing written feedback on writing assignments. Their potential in assessment would have to be further studied in more detail.

Teachers consider AI tools to be time-saving and efficient, particularly when it comes to creating lesson content. Additionally, they believe that AI-powered tools make EFL classes more interactive. The greatest benefit for students is the instant feedback that AI tools can provide to students, and their ability to individualize the learning process. On the other hand, the teachers expressed their concerns about the negative effect of AI tools on students' creativity, their increased dependence on technology, and problems with data privacy.

The findings resonate with previous studies that identify similar areas of AI tools that teachers find useful, such as the creation of materials, and adaptation of course book activities, as well as increasing learners' motivation to study (Jomaa et al., 2025; Hazaymeh et al., 2024; Edmett et al., 2024; Pokrivcakova, 2019).

As indicated by several authors, plagiarism, misuse of AI-generated content, and protection of personal data are the most commonly identified drawbacks of AI-powered systems (Meristo, 2025; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Erbaş, 2023; Crompton & Burke, 2023). The results of the study also support these claims. Namely, concerning teachers' awareness of educating their students on the ethical usage of AI tools, less than half of them (40%) inform their learners about academic honesty policies. However, teachers are more focused on addressing data privacy issues, with 65% of them informing their students thereof. The Pearson correlation tests indicated low positive relationships between those who utilize AI tools in their EFL classes and the emphasis they place on students' academic integrity and data privacy awareness.

Contrary to this, only 20% of the respondents have received training on ethical usage of AI. This finding underscores the need to organize professional teacher training not only in the practical use of AI tools in the education but also in raising teachers' and students' awareness of and responsible AI usage.

The results of the survey provided answers to the research questions.

1. *How often and for which specific purpose do primary school EFL teachers integrate AI tools into their lesson plans and the creation of teaching materials?*

Teachers are generally in favor of AI tools, and they prefer using them as teacher-centered tools, outside the classroom, for preparation of lesson materials. They do not overuse these tools, as they are aware of their benefits and challenges. It may be assumed that teachers lack sufficient knowledge of both teacher- and student-centered AI tools, or technical conditions for AI usage, such as stable internet connection, and computer equipment in the classroom.

2. *What are the benefits and challenges faced by primary school EFL teachers when using AI tools in the classroom?*

Time-saving is considered to be a major advantage, in addition to enhanced student motivation for class participation. However, teachers perceive that excessive reliance on technology can reduce student creativity and critical thinking.

3. *To what extent do primary school English teachers incorporate education on academic integrity and data privacy usage of AI tools in their classrooms?*

Teachers are inconsistent in their approach towards addressing ethical concerns such as data privacy and academic integrity. While the majority inform their students about the ethical implications of AI use, there are some teachers who do not do so. This underscores the need for educating teachers about these issues, which would in turn help them clarify their dilemmas and encourage them to raise their students' awareness of the ethical usage of AI in education. It may be assumed that the lack of teacher training leads to teacher's reluctance to incorporate education on academic integrity and data protection related to AI usage in their classrooms. In addition, the Ministry of Education has not prepared a legal framework and teacher guidelines on ethical AI use in education. These could serve as valuable training resources to improve teachers' competence in managing ethical use of AI.
The findings of the survey confirmed the hypotheses that here are positive correlations between the extent of teachers' use of AI tools and the degree to which they educate their students about AI-related ethical issues.

Conclusion

Since AI tools are a recent novelty in educational language technology, teachers lack knowledge and self-confidence in their implementation. The Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia is following this trend and preparing to launch a project on integration of AI in primary schools. In view of this, the study explored teachers' perspectives on the use of AI tools in the EFL classroom, their benefits and drawbacks, and the ethical aspects of their utilization.

Data were collected from 20 primary school English teachers from North Macedonia. The results indicate that teachers recognize the potential of AI tools for lesson preparation and enhanced student engagement, but they also outline the challenges that include reduced creativity and ethical issues. The implications include educating teachers on effective and ethical usage of AI tools, which would enhance the language teaching and learning process.

Recommendations for effective implementation of AI in primary schools should take into account three key aspects of the current state of Macedonian schools: computer infrastructure, teachers' and students' digital and AI skills, and legal frameworks for AI usage in education. The Ministry of Education and Science began the process of digitalizing schools several years before the COVID-19 pandemic, which only accelerated the efforts to modernize education. The challenges that arose included poor internet access, insufficient or malfunctioning computers, resistance to using new technology, and the digital divide. Teachers face the same issues today, which discourages them from implementing AI into the curricula. The Ministry needs to improve the infrastructure to enable smooth transition from traditional or digital classrooms to AI-integrated education. Furthermore, specialized training should be organized for teachers and other school authorities to support them in gaining a deeper understanding and enhance their ability to work with these tools effectively. This includes knowledge of how AI systems work, using AI tools and applications, understanding concepts like machine learning, data analysis, problem-solving with AI, and ethical considerations around AI. Since social inequality is widening the digital divide, the Ministry should put efforts into narrowing the divide by providing smart devices and internet access to socially disadvantaged students and teachers. Finally, there are currently no comprehensive laws governing AI use in education aligned with EU standards. The only existing regulation is the National ICT Strategy 2021-2025, prepared by North Macedonia's Ministry of Education, supported by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration. It includes digital literacy, creativity, and collaboration goals for education, but AI ethical issues are not included. (Ministry of Information Society and Administration, 2021). Workshops and seminars with foreign experts could be organized for teachers, since the survey results showed that the number of teachers who have attended such sessions is low (15%). This is despite the fact that teachers who use AI tools want to inform their students about the ethical implications of AI use.

Recommendations for further research

In light of the study findings, further research could focus on providing teachers with more insight into the ethical aspects underlying the use of AI tools and how they can train students to utilize AI tools in their studies in an academically honest manner. Additionally, schools, universities, and most importantly relevant governmental bodies should prepare guidelines for the integration of AI in education. Privacy issues arising from unethical usage of AI tools should be studied in detail to raise both teachers' and students' awareness of the consequences of misuse of AI-powered systems. Furthermore, AI literacy trainings should be organized for teachers to equip them with the new subset of digital skills. This aligns with Edmett et al.'s (2024) findings, which emphasize the necessity to equip teachers with the AI skills required for creating lesson plans and teaching materials (Edmett et al., 2024). This would lead to maximizing the intended benefits of AI tools for language teachers and enhancing the language learning experience.

Limitations

The study has three limitations that need to be considered for further research. Firstly, the findings of the study are limited because of the small number of participants. Only 20 teachers participated in the study. Further research could include larger samples and different research methods such as classroom observation and interviews, which could help gain deeper insight into teachers' usage of AI tools and inform policy makers how to integrate AI technology with ethics education more effectively. Secondly, the participants are all from North Macedonia, which limits the scope of the results. Teachers with an international background would increase the generalizability of the study findings. Finally, the participants were selected because they were attending a conference. We may assume that teachers who are investing in their professional development by going to conferences and workshops are those who are more enthusiastic about learning new things such as AI tools and implementing them in their classes.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Dear teacher!

I am conducting research on the use of AI in lesson planning and would like to hear about your experience. The survey should only take a few minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation.

---

1. Do you use AI tools for your English classes? Yes No

2. How often do you use AI tools to prepare teaching materials?

Always
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Hardly ever
Never

3. How often do you use AI tools during your classes?

Always

Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Hardly ever
Never

4. Do you use AI tools to provide written feedback on writing assignments? Yes No

5. How often do you use AI tools to provide written feedback on writing assignments?

Always
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Hardly ever
Never

6. Which of the AI tools below do you use in your English classes? Tick all that apply.

ChatGPT
Grammarly
Canva
Quillbot
Twee
Turnitin

7. What other AI tools do you regularly use/have you used in your English classes?

____

8. In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit for teachers using AI tools?

____

9. In your opinion, what is the greatest disadvantage for teachers using AI tools?

____

10. How do students benefit from using AI tools in their English classes? Tick all that apply.

They are more motivated to study.
They focus better.
AI tools provide them with instant feedback.
AI tools personalize students' learning.
AI tools increase student engagement.
AI tools develop students' creativity.

11. Do you teach your students about academic integrity when using AI tools? Yes No

12. Do you teach your students about data privacy issues when using AI tools? Yes No

13. Have you attended any training on AI ethical usage? Yes No

Integrating drama into education: theoretical foundations and contemporary challenges

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is to offer an in-depth overview of key theoretical principles that support the integration of drama techniques into language teaching. By establishing a strong theoretical framework, the literature review introduces key theories underpinning drama pedagogy, explores its integration within broader communicative methodologies, and contrasts it with traditional teaching approaches. In addition to the theoretical insights, we conducted a systematic review that provided empirical evidence to support our findings and inform our practical recommendations. Our main findings indicate that, compared to traditional methods, drama enhances student engagement, communication skills, and confidence while reducing language anxiety, making it a highly effective tool for language acquisition. However, challenges such as limited teacher knowledge, insufficient class time, and a lack of structured programs persist, underscoring the need for enhanced teacher training, better resources, and a more standardized approach to drama in education. The study also identifies practical recommendations for implementing drama effectively in language classrooms.

Keywords*: drama-based learning, effects of drama, language acquisition, teacher training, EFL teaching*

Introduction

Language teaching has, in the last 20 years, gradually transitioned from the traditional way of teaching to more interactive and student focused approach. This aspect is addressed by Kolb and Kolb (2006), where authors explained how the learning process adapted by moving from an approach where teacher is the centre of the class, and the only aim is to transfer knowledge to more active learning process where learners take a more central role. Authors further explain how teachers are increasingly adopting experiential learning approaches, because it provides an ideal learning environment that maximises achievement and enhances language acquisition. However, institutions often fail to provide adequate support and make necessary adjustments to their evaluation systems to accommodate experiential learning methods. The effectiveness of experiential learning may be compromised if faculty members are not motivated to invest in the development of such courses (Kolb & Kolb, 2006).

One type of experiential learning approach is drama-based learning. Through drama techniques, learners actively use new vocabulary and structures, enhancing confidence, pronunciation, fluency, and cultural awareness (Zafeiriadou, 2009; Maley & Duff, 2005; Schewe, 2013; Akar-Vural & Somers, 2011; Freeman et al., 2010). Angelianawati (2019) highlights drama's role in bridging theory and practice in language learning. Despite its documented benefits, drama remains under-researched in EFL teacher education. Lou et al. (2024) highlight the limited evidence on process drama's impact in such contexts. This study explores practical ways to integrate drama-based methods into EFL teacher training, aiming to improve curriculum design and teaching methodology.

Theoretical background

Historical context of drama in education: from performance to pedagogical innovation

Drama now goes beyond theatre and serves as a teaching tool that builds communication, creativity, and learner identity, engaging students emotionally and intellectually. This chapter critically re-examines the development of theatre in education, emphasising how its underlying theories and methods address contemporary issues, especially in pre-service EFL teacher education, where theatre can promote reflective teaching methods, boost confidence, and lessen anxiety.

Courtney (1989) describes drama as a human-made process where imagination is activated through empathy and identification. Similarly, Boulton (2014) expands this notion by viewing drama as a form of literature that transcends the written word, coming to life, walking and talking before our eyes. In an educational context, Holden (1982) adds that drama involves any activity where learners represent either themselves or others, entering a world of "let us pretend."

In the early 1900s, drama was influenced by speech training, literature, and progressive education, with educators like Elsie Fogerty and Harriet Finlay-Johnson demonstrating its pedagogical value. Later, Winifred Ward's "Creative Dramatics" were created with an emphasis on student-driven performances. Peter Slade introduced child-centred drama for expression and therapy, while Rudolf Laban integrated drama with movement-based education (Bolton, 2007). In the mid-20th century, a distinction emerged: drama was participant-driven and experiential, while theatre was focused on audience-centred performance (Fleming, 2019; Way, 1967, in Zafeiridou, 2009).

Pioneers Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton revolutionised drama teaching. Heathcote used drama to explore new situations and introduced "living through drama", which redefined classroom dynamics. Bolton expanded this work with "Drama on Education", further legitimising its pedagogical role (Fleming, 2019). Heathcote also introduced the "teacher-in-role" method, where educators participated in role-play, challenging traditional teacher-student dynamics. Their "Mantle of the Expert" concept allowed students to act as experts, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving (Anderson, 2012). These innovations continue to shape performative language pedagogy (Schewe, 2013), also helping future teachers rehearse teaching in emotionally safe and imaginative contexts.

Theories and teaching methods supporting drama in language learning

Drama-based instruction is underpinned by a rich interplay of learning theories that foreground interaction, emotion, and embodied experience. Unlike traditional, form-focused methodologies, drama integrates social and physical dimensions of learning. The following section synthesises key theoretical frameworks supporting drama in language education.

Vygotsky's (1978, as cited in Baykal et al., 2019) social learning theory emphasises interaction in language development. Drama promotes collaboration and linguistic competence through role-play and improvisation, allowing learners to co-construct knowledge (Schewe, 2013). According to Vygotsky, learning is enhanced through support within the zone of what he calls proximal development, which is the gap between what learners are able to learn on their own and what they can accomplish with some assistance. Role-play, in this context, serves as a tool for advancing both cognitive and language abilities.

Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach stresses meaningful communication and emotional involvement, which drama naturally encourages. Krashen's (1994) Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis supports the use of authentic contexts for language growth, while his Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) explains how anxiety impedes learning. Drama helps lower this filter by creating a relaxed, supportive environment (Stern, 1980). Piazzoli (2011) affirms the transformative impact of these principles on language education.

Experiential learning (Kolb et al., 2001) links active practice with cognitive and emotional engagement. Dramatic activities promote reflection and reinforce language through experience (Mollaei & Rahnama, 2012). Gressler (2002) and Mockler (2002) further argue that drama counters passive learning through embodied participation.

The theory of embodied cognition (Glenberg, 2010) highlights how movement aids cognitive processing. Drama supports this by combining movement with language to help internalise structures (Heathcote, 1984). Lakoff and Johnson (1999) emphasise metaphorical reasoning in learning, while Wilson

(2002) and Dewey (1938) stress the sensorimotor basis of cognition. Similarly, Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by Asher (1977), links language learning with movement. Richards and Rogers (2001) describe TPR as a method that blends instruction with motor activity. TPR reduces stress and supports retention by activating both brain hemispheres, thereby improving engagement and memory (Savic, 2014; Nuraeni, 2019) which aligns with Krashen's affective principles.

These complementary theories are used in drama-based language instruction, and each one emphasises how well it promotes engagement, communication, and retention. Drama is a potent tool in language education because it offers an active, emotionally complex, and physically immersive approach that differs from traditional methods.

Traditional vs. drama-based language teaching approaches: a theoretical comparison

Language teaching has long been guided by tension between traditional and experimental methods. Traditional approaches were once focused on structure, repetition, and teacher centrality, whereas modern approaches, such as drama-based methods, have shifted towards interaction, emotional involvement, and learner independence. This comparative analysis critically examines the main differences between these approaches to teaching EFL, specifically in terms of their effects upon teaching ideology, classroom dynamics, learner motivation, and outcomes. By analysing theoretical foundations, teacher-learner roles, instructional techniques, and affective, social, and linguistic impacts, the analysis shows how drama pedagogy creates a more inclusive and participatory language learning.

Traditional methods in language education emphasise grammatical precision, memorisation, and teacher authority. These include:

- Grammar-Translation Method (GTM): Rooted in classical language instruction, GTM emphasises vocabulary lists, direct translation, and grammatical rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Communication is largely absent, as students seldom engage in authentic speech production.
- Audio-Lingual Method (ALM): Inspired by behaviourist psychology (Skinner, 1957), ALM uses repetition and habit formation through drills. Though effective in developing accuracy, it lacks depth in honest communication and creativity (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979).
- Direct Method: Emerging as a response to GTM, it emphasizes immediate use of language, without translation, focusing on oral skills (Stern, 1991). While more engaging, it still maintains teacher dominance and prescriptive materials.

These approaches often disregard learner autonomy and emotional engagement in favour of separating language components from relevant contexts (Wong, 2005; Batool et al., 2017).

However, drama-based approaches encompass experiential and constructivist theories. With the help of these methods, students can develop meaningful identities, solve practical problems, and use language intentionally. Their strength lies in how they operationalise these through classroom practices, such as *Teacher-in-Role*, developed by Heathcote (1984), and *Mantle of the Expert*, designed by Bolton and Heathcote (1995). For pre-service teachers, this immersive practice fosters confidence, empathy, and critical thinking skills that are crucial for professional readiness (Piazzoli, 2018).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) talk about how, drama extends the ideas of Communicative Language Teaching, with stressed meaningful interaction. Similarly, drama also draws from Task-Based Teaching, which centres on real-life tasks and projects (Ellis, 2003). Drama is extended by incorporating embodied and emotionally resonant activities, such as role-play and storytelling.

Traditional approaches, which perceive language acquisition as the development of habits, are based on behaviourist and structuralist theories. Students may become disengaged and their affective needs may be neglected if form is prioritised over fluency (Wong, 2005). Teacher-centred classrooms may discourage students' effort and hinder their spontaneous speech. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD has inspired drama-based approaches, which employ scaffolding and teamwork to promote growth. Learning by doing and reflecting is further supported by Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb et al., 2001). These frameworks support drama's emphasis on engagement, risk-taking, and long-term retention.

Traditional approaches often fail to address learners' emotional barriers. Krashen (1982) outlined how elevated anxiety hinder language learning, a concept he termed the Affective Filter Hypothesis. By providing a safe environment for experimentation, drama lowers this filter, which is especially advantageous for pre-service teachers (Bréauté, 2023; Ozmen, 2010). Moreover, drama activates embodied cognition, where movement and gesture facilitate deeper cognitive processing (Glenberg, 2010; Wilson, 2002). Students use physicality to reinforce meaning, making abstract concepts more tangible and memorable (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

The Mantle of the Expert technique, creatively redefines students as accountable "experts" who use role-based scenarios to solve real-world problems (Bolton & Heathcote, 1995). These kinds of experiences foster critical thinking, empathy, teamwork, and language proficiency.

Traditional teaching focuses on linguistic output, sometimes at the expense of broader communicative or pedagogical development. Drama, however, contributes to a holistic skill set: it cultivates empathy, collaboration, problem-solving, and classroom presence—skills essential for pre-service teachers. Dramatic performances improve verbal and nonverbal communication, as Piazzoli (2018) points out, and provide future teachers with a priceless opportunity to practise actual classroom dynamics.

Drama's versatility is another significant advantage. Drama integrates smoothly with various pedagogical approaches, including Task-Based Teaching, Content and Language Integrated Learning and Communicative Language Teaching too. It also accommodates differentiated learning styles—kinaesthetic, auditory, visual—making it inclusive and learner-centred.

This chapter has explored the contrasting foundations and outcomes of traditional and drama-based approaches to EFL teaching. The argument demonstrates how drama-based education offers a dynamic, student-centred method that improves the significance of language learning through affective and cognitive engagement. Drama fosters a participatory environment grounded in theory and real-life relevance. Its inclusion in language teacher education is essential for preparing reflective, confident professionals.

Table 1 summarises the key theoretical and practical distinctions between traditional and drama-based language teaching approaches discussed throughout this chapter. It provides a comparative summary of fundamental pedagogical components, including learning objectives, classroom procedures, teacher and student roles, and emotional engagement. By synthesising key points, the table provides a concise point of reference for comprehending the pedagogical shift in EFL education towards more interactive and holistic approaches.

Table 1. Traditional vs. drama-based language teaching approaches

Aspect	Traditional teaching methods	Drama-based teaching
Core philosophy	Transmission of knowledge from teacher to student.	Knowledge co-constructed through interaction and experience.
Role of teacher	Central authority and instructor.	Facilitator, co-participant, or “teacher-in-role” (Heathcote, 1984; Bolton, 1992).
Role of student	Passive receiver, focus on accuracy.	Active creator, focus on communication and creativity, co-creator (Vygotsky, 1978).
Learning focus	Grammar rules, vocabulary lists, translation.	Emotional engagement, social interaction, real-life contexts.
Primary activities	Drills, repetition, translation, dictation.	Role-play, improvisation, tableau, simulations, “Mantle of the Expert”.
Language use	Often decontextualized and isolated.	Contextualized, embedded in narrative or interaction.

Classroom environment	Structured, rigid, sometimes anxiety-inducing.	Supportive, imaginative, encourages risk-taking.
Emotional engagement	Limited.	High—leverages empathy, identity, and affective involvement, reduces anxiety (Krashen, 1982; Piazzoli, 2011).
Outcome focus	Linguistic competence (accuracy, vocabulary).	Communicative competence (fluency, confidence, adaptability).
Anxiety levels	Often high due to fear of mistakes.	Lowered through collaborative and creative contexts.
Interaction type	Teacher-student, limited peer interaction.	Peer collaboration, improvisation (Schewe, 2013).
Cognitive involvement	Repetition, rote memory.	Problem solving, creativity (Kolb et al., 2001; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

Main aim and secondary aims

The purpose of this article is to present a thorough theoretical examination of the advantages of employing drama-based approaches in English language teaching. To achieve this aim, several research objectives were stated, which are as follows:

- To provide and contrast the core pedagogical foundations of traditional versus drama-based teaching methods.
- To synthesize recurring empirical findings.
- To identify common implementation challenges.
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for the sustained integration of drama in language education.

Methodology

This study employed a dual-method approach that combined theoretical inquiry with empirical analysis, to examine the role and impact of drama pedagogy in English language teaching. First, the fundamental theories and pedagogical principles of both traditional and drama-based approaches to language instruction were examined through a comparative analysis. This theoretical inquiry laid the groundwork for understanding the conceptual shift introduced by drama in educational settings. Second, a systematic review of twelve selected empirical studies was conducted. These studies were analysed to extract key information related to learning objectives, participant demographics, teacher preparation, applied drama techniques, research findings, and implementation challenges. Finally, the two strands—theoretical and empirical—were synthesised to develop practical recommendations aimed at enhancing teacher training, informing curriculum design, and supporting the effective integration of drama-based methods into EFL teacher education programs.

To locate relevant studies, we searched ERIC using keywords: 'implementing drama in education,' 'drama in language education,' and 'recommendations for successful implementation of drama.' This resulted in an initial 273 records. After applying the criteria for selecting the studies, which were:

- Peer-reviewed empirical research.
- Research centred on the use of drama in English Language Teaching (not performance arts courses).
- Participants: learners of any level (primary to tertiary), in-service teachers, general classroom contexts.
- Outcomes: cognitive, emotional, linguistic, or social learning outcomes.
- Studies since 2016 (last 10 years)

There were 42 studies left, which after first screening of titles and abstracts, 12 studies were selected for the review.

Coding and categorization of selected studies

- For the review we have developed a coding system to compare studies based on:
    - Participant demographics (age group, education level, subject area).
    - Drama methods used (e.g., role-play, improvisation, process drama, teacher-in-role, forum theatre).
    - Learning goals (language skills, empathy development, critical thinking, cultural awareness, emotional intelligence, etc.).
    - Teacher training and preparation involved.

Practical considerations and implementation challenges.

Systematic review of selected studies on drama techniques in EFL teacher education - results

This review examines how drama techniques influence classroom procedures and learner performance, focusing on the methods used, contexts, and implementation challenges. We present the summary of selected studies for the review, in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Selected studies for the review

Number of the study	Title, author, year of publication
Study 1	The Effect of Using Drama in English Language Learning among Young Learners: A Case Study of 6th Grade Female Pupils in Sakaka City (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020)
Study 2	Exploring Students' Perspectives on The Use of Drama Techniques in Efl Speaking Lessons (Dawoud et al., 2024)
Study 3	Enhancing English Language Skills through a Collaborative Drama Project (Mardiani & Hanifah, 2023)
Study 4	Drama-Based Approach in English Language Teaching (Bessadet, 2022)
Study 5	Using Drama in English Language Teaching: Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Perspectives and Practices (Ali & Kani, 2024)
Study 6	Creative Drama on Teacher Candidates' Speech Anxiety (Şahin & Şen, 2023)
Study 7	The Views of ELT Pre-Service Teachers on Using Drama in Teaching English and on Their Practices Involved in Drama Course (Baykal et al., 2019)
Study 8	The effect of creative drama on the creative self-efficacy of pre-service teachers (Eyüp, 2024)
Study 9	The Effects Of Creative Drama Activities On Developing English Speaking Skills (Göktürk et al., 2020)
Study 10	The Effect of Creative Drama on Student Success and Speaking Skill in Foreign Language Teaching (Culha, 2020)
Study 11	The Use of Project-based Learning Focusing on Drama to Promote Speaking Skills of EFL Learners (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018)
Study 12	Enhancing EFL Students' English Competency Through Drama: A Case Study in a Primary School in China (Yuanyuan, 2019)

Participant demographics

From the demographic data of participants across the twelve reviewed studies, several themes and patterns emerge. Firstly, pre-service teachers and school-aged learners are the two dominant groups studied. Pre-service teachers (Studies 3–8), usually in their early to mid-20s, reflect strong interest in drama's role in teacher development. School-aged learners (Studies 1, 2, 9–12) range from sixth to eleventh grade**,** with sample sizes varying from small groups (e.g., six students) to full classes (up to 45 students).

The studies span several countries, including Indonesia, Algeria, China, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, with Turkey being the most frequently represented. The gender distribution was generally balanced, although a few studies involved female-only groups due to cultural or contextual factors (Studies 1 and 5). Some studies note participants' mixed socioeconomic backgrounds, including parental education and urban/rural location. Many lacked theatre experience, revealing drama's instructional potential.

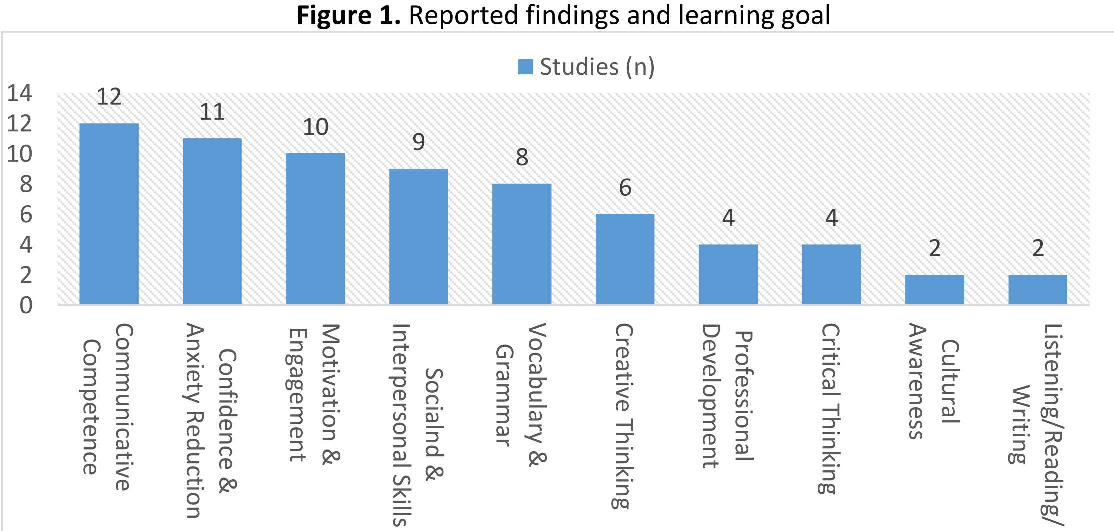
Drama methods used

Based on the analysis of 12 studies, several recurring drama methods emerge Role-play and improvisation (each in 6 studies) were the most common, followed by scripted plays (3 studies). Creative drama workshops (3 studies) offered comprehensive activities like warm-ups, animations, and themed performances. There was a noticeable trend towards combining planning (script creation and analysis) with impromptu performance (games, pantomime, and improvisation), indicating a balance between methodical and imaginative approaches.

Overall, role-playing and improvisation dominate due to their flexibility and emphasis on spontaneous language use. The recurrence of script work—whether from canonical texts like Riders to the Sea or student-created material—indicates the importance of textual engagement for deeper linguistic and cultural learning. Combining structured preparation with improvisational freedom appears most effective for enhancing communication, teamwork, and confidence.

Learning goals and key findings

Figure 1. Reported findings and learning goal



Across the twelve studies reviewed (see Figure 1), improving oral language skills emerged as the most consistent goal and outcome (12/12). Drama-based techniques enhanced learners' fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Studies 1, 3, 6, 10), thereby fostering spontaneous and authentic communication. Learners developed grammatical accuracy, creative self-expression, and confidence in dynamic dialogues. In drama-integrated classrooms, students often outperform their peers in traditional settings (Studies 1, 3, 10), with notable gains in speaking and a reduction in speech anxiety, especially in public contexts (Studies 6, 10).

Affective benefits were also prominent, with 11 studies (11/12) reporting increased motivation, confidence, and reduced anxiety and fear of mistakes (Studies 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10). Drama created safe, supportive environments that encouraged participation, especially among shy or anxious individuals, shifting them from passive to active roles (Studies 4, 7, 9).

Ten studies (10/12) highlighted drama as a key factor in increasing learners' motivation and engagement, as well as fostering language and emotional growth. Nine studies (9/12) emphasised social and interpersonal skill development, including collaboration, empathy and peer feedback (Studies 3, 5, 8, 11). Activities such as improvisation, project-based learning, and role-playing supported effective group work and communication. Six studies (6/12) noted the growth of creative thinking and expression through problem-solving and imaginative tasks (Studies 5, 7, 11).

For pre-service teachers, four studies (4/12) reported professional development outcomes, including enhanced reflective practice, classroom presence, and creative self-efficacy (Studies 4, 8, 9). Another four studies (4/12) addressed cognitive development, noting improved metacognitive awareness, learner autonomy, and critical thinking (Studies 4, 6). Eight studies (8/12) showed better vocabulary and grammar retention through contextualised and meaningful input (Studies 2, 5, 7, 10).

Less commonly, drama was credited with fostering cultural and aesthetic awareness (2/12) and enhancing reading, writing, and listening comprehension in creative contexts (2/12) (Studies 2, 12).

Across the twelve studies, a recurring tension emerged between structured drama training and more informal, experiential approaches. Some studies emphasised formal preparation—such as courses, expert-led workshops, or institutional integration (Studies 2, 7, 8, 9, 12)—while others relied on self-directed, improvisational teaching methods (Studies 1, 3, 4, 6). Despite varying levels of formal training, nearly all studies portrayed the teacher not as a traditional authority figure, but as a facilitator, reflecting a shift toward learner-centred pedagogy.

Even without formal training, many teachers engaged in reflective preparation, adapting materials and responding to group dynamics. Study 5, on the other hand, found gaps in pedagogical knowledge, particularly in classroom management and theoretical foundations. This indicates that more comprehensive professional development is necessary.

All studies showed a shift from direct instruction to a more supportive, facilitative teaching role. Reflective lesson planning was the subject of eight studies that emphasised the importance of carefully adapting activities and scripts to students' varying skill levels. Six studies included formal drama training, although access to it remains restricted. According to three studies, teachers desire more guidance in both theoretical and practical applications, indicating a significant need for professional development. Collaboration and support were mentioned less frequently (in two studies), but they emphasised the value of interdisciplinary teamwork and expert input.

Implementation challenges

The review of selected studies reveals recurring challenges that affect the successful use of drama in education. These include affective barriers, institutional and logistical limitations, classroom management, linguistic and cognitive difficulties, and socio-cultural constraints.

Emotional resistance was a standard issue across many studies. Students often felt anxious, embarrassed, or self-conscious during performances, improvisations, or public speaking (Studies 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12). Fear of peer judgment reduced participation and fluency. Some studies (e.g., Study 6) viewed these emotional barriers as both obstacles and target areas for drama to address. Without proper support, students—especially those who were shy or lacked confidence—often resisted drama activities early on (Studies 5, 8, 9).

Many studies noted that strict curricula and short class periods limited the time available for drama activities (Studies 3, 5, 7, 10). A lack of training and limited resources like props or space also restricted creative possibilities (Studies 5, 7, 8, 9).

Several studies (Studies 1, 5, 7) noted difficulties maintaining order during drama activities, especially in large or crowded classrooms. Group tasks were affected by dominance, unequal participation, and lack of collaboration (Studies 8, 9).

Drama demands expressive and spontaneous language use, which poses challenges in EFL contexts. Students with shared L1 backgrounds (e.g., Arabic or Sundanese) struggled with pronunciation, code-switching, and limited vocabulary (Studies 1, 3). Memorising English scripts was especially hard for low-proficiency learners, increasing anxiety and reducing fluency (Studies 3, 4).

In some settings, students were unfamiliar with theatre or saw drama as inappropriate for formal learning, particularly in more conservative cultures (Studies 4, 7). Institutional resistance—such as rigid school policies or sceptical teacher attitudes—also hindered drama integration.

Studies 2 and 6 showed that careful planning, clear instructions, and relevant content helped drama activities be more effective and go with greater ease. Implementing drama in EFL education is complex and multifaceted process. While it offers powerful pedagogical benefits, success depends on teacher training, institutional support, curriculum flexibility, and attention to students' emotional and language needs. Drama's full educational potential can be realised by addressing the most prevalent issues, which include classroom dynamics, time constraints, and affective barriers, through inclusive practices and adaptive planning.

Discussion

This section synthesises the theoretical and empirical findings of the study, structured around its four main aims. The first aim—providing a theoretical overview of drama-based language teaching—was addressed in the literature review, where core pedagogical principles supporting drama were contrasted with traditional approaches and summarised in a comparative table. The contrast illustrated how traditional methods, though effective in fields such as memorisation and accuracy, have been found to neglect communication, limit creativity, and affective needs, turning learners into passive individuals who then become anxious (Wong, 2005). Drama-based methods, on the other hand, have been found to enhance learner participation as noted by Mockler (2002) and provide space for natural interaction and emotional engagement. Anxiety among learners is minimised while problem-solving skills and fluency are improved through such methods. It enables educators to act as facilitators, creating a safe environment that fosters motivation and engagement. For pre-service teachers, it can be an effective means of improving their pedagogical skills, flexibility, and further increasing their empathy, adopting a more practice-oriented and comprehensive approach than traditional approaches.

Addressing the second aim—synthesising recurring empirical findings—the review found consistent empirical evidence that drama supports both psychological and professional growth of EFL teacher trainees. All twelve studies found that drama helped people become more self-aware, confident, and emotionally mature, aligning seamlessly with the findings of Piazzoli (2018) and Bréauté (2023). The lowering of the affective filter is evident in the explicit decrease in anxiety and increase in self-confidence of learners, with 11 out of 12 studies showing this effect — a notable convergence, as traditional methods are often associated with an inability to reduce this barrier. Students in drama contexts, even those initially shy or prejudiced against English, demonstrated radical shifts in their willingness to communicate and express themselves (Culha, 2020; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). Improved oral proficiency, confidence, and motivation (Studies 1, 2, 10, 11) are also linked with teacher competence in carrying out drama activities.

Nevertheless, more broadly, it is involved in teacher training in activity design, scaffolding, and analysis of practical skills, such as reflection, peer review, and performance assessment criteria (Chen et al., 2020). Increased creative self-efficacy among pre-service teachers (Studies 8 and 9) further attests to drama's ability to foster the flexible and creative thinking required in today's evolving pedagogy. Discomfort may exist at first; however, drama remains a valuable tool to help students get beyond such limitations. The studies show that it is the process of drama itself that creates the confidence it demands at the beginning, provided that students are guided through respectful scaffolding and a secure, supportive space.

Furthermore, the theoretical emphasis on contextualised language use and communication-focused activities is empirically confirmed by the universal targeting of speaking and communicative skills in all 12 studies. Drama methods, such as role-play and improvisation, which hold prominence as core activities in the theoretical framework, consequently, have been used most in practice, resulting in measurable progress in fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary (e.g., Göktürk et al., 2020; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018). The embodied cognition aspect, where movement and gesture facilitate deeper processing, is echoed in students' reported ability to express thoughts and feelings more effectively with "movements and mimics" (Culha, 2020) and the emphasis on integrating verbal and nonverbal communication (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018).

The shift in the teacher's role from central authority to facilitator or co-participant—a defining characteristic of drama-based learning—is consistently demonstrated across all 12 reviewed studies. This change aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasising how drama allows teachers to become facilitators, guiding interaction, supporting risk-taking, and sharing power with learners. Our findings further echo Gautam and Agarwal's (2023) argument that teachers as facilitators do not simply transmit knowledge but instead create the conditions for exploration, dialogue, and learner autonomy, which are skills that are indispensable for the development of confident and communicative future teachers. Although this approach requires teachers an extensive amount of preparation and high adaptation skills, it has been proven to be very important in creating a collaborative environment and autonomy, which traditional methods often disregard. Although the precise method of "Mantle of the Expert" was not mentioned in any of the studies, the concept was implicit in project-based designs (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018), where teacher trainees took on roles of experts during acting out specific scenarios, thereby developing not only language but also critical thinking, empathy, and teamwork.

The third objective of the study was to identify recurring issues that arise when incorporating drama into lessons. The study found several affective barriers that learners encountered, including anxiety and embarrassment, as well as their low confidence levels. These emotional barriers occurred largely with shy learners as well as those with limited English language proficiency, which ultimately resulted in less engagement from them. These barriers of initial reluctance were also observed in studies conducted by Atas (2015) and Balgos (2020); however, as the drama workshops progressed, their anxieties slowly diminished because activities were delivered in an appropriate, non-threatening manner and supported by frequent formative feedback. Regardless of the activity, classroom management issues emerged repeatedly (time constraints, small classroom space and maintaining discipline), and learners also encountered linguistic elements blocking their ability to use or sustain fluency (limited vocabulary, difficulties with pronunciation, or memory challenges). Logistical limitations (rigidity in curriculum and lack of resources) were another recurring issue (Culha, 2020) and demonstrated the need for structural support for drama to work effectively as a sustained pedagogical practice.

The fourth aim involved proposing actionable recommendations based on the raised issues of implementing drama. For drama to be embedded meaningfully in teacher education, institutional support is essential. Despite increasing evidence of the value of drama, it still remains underutilised, perhaps due to restrictive curriculum, limited staff training, and a lack of willingness from learners – these concerns are also raised by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2004) and Podlozny (2000). To look beyond simply providing only a few drama lessons, drama pedagogy needs fuller and stronger support from institutions in terms of redesigning curriculum and allocating resources. Language teaching institutions, particularly those training pre-service teachers, should embed drama into their core curricula—not as an optional or extracurricular add-on, but as a foundational element of teacher education. Nguyen (2023) found that the teacher's limited knowledge of drama techniques affected the range of activities he used, with the role-play being the predominant approach. This confirms the necessity for designing a comprehensive, highly detailed drama-based program that assists teachers in using drama for instructional purposes (Podlozny, 2000; Piazzoli & Kennedy, 2014). Professional development programs should include drama-based micro-teaching (Gürses et al., 2005), which bridges theory and practice, thereby building teacher confidence. Ongoing reflective practice is essential for transforming theoretical insights into practical classroom strategies (Hahl & Keinanen, 2021; Ekşi, 2012; Hismanoğlu, 2012).

Supportive classroom environments are key. Teachers should acknowledge and proactively address students' initial anxieties by creating highly supportive, non-judgmental environments. This aspect was supported by Reed and Seong (2013), who conducted a drama-based English course in Korea. After engaging in bonding games and structured warm-ups, a psychologically safe atmosphere was created in the classroom, allowing students to overcome shyness and communicate more freely. According to Winston (2012), when implementing drama in their lessons, teachers should be skilful in matching projects to students' interests, be playful in their approach, appreciate the role of physicality and understand its interactive nature and ability to foster emotional engagement. Boudreault (2010) emphasises that activities should be planned strategically to grow in intensity as participation increases so that learners can gradually feel comfortable taking part in them. These steps and successful implementation programs should be shared with teacher trainees and in-service teachers as part of courses and workshops led by experts.

From the reviewed studies, several methodological limitations became apparent. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of drama on teacher identity and learner outcomes, through well-designed longitudinal studies. Another promising direction is the exploration of culture in drama-based pedagogy. By taking on roles from diverse cultural contexts, learners can engage with cultural nuances in a dynamic and embodied way, thereby deepening both their linguistic competence and cultural understanding.

Through the deliberate and systematic adoption of drama-based approaches, EFL teaching can move beyond rote learning, shaping a new generation of confident, communicative, and holistic language learners and, most importantly, innovative and effective teachers armed with appropriate pedagogical tools.

Conclusion

This study has shown that drama-based pedagogy is not merely a methodological option standing in opposition to traditional language teaching, but rather one that transforms the entire dynamic of the classroom, the role of teachers, and student development. The theoretical comparison showed that, in contrast to the opposed transmission-focused nature of conventional methods, drama draws on experiential, social, and embodied learning theories to create a participatory and emotionally engaging environment. These theoretical perspectives were reinforced by the systematic review, which showed consistent gains in oral proficiency, motivation, confidence and collaborative skills across a range of learner groups. Because of the nature of teaching and its relationship to drama-based pedagogy, pre-service teachers benefit most from the findings.

Although drama has proved to be a positive tool in teaching, much is still required for practical integration into the everyday curriculum. Some limiting factors in the consistent use of drama in education include teachers' lack of knowledge, time constraints and difficulties in classroom management. Drama must be viewed as a fundamental pedagogical practice integrated into teacher education programs rather than as an adjunct if these obstacles are to be removed. This will require a sustained professional development program, a restructuring of the curriculum, and stronger institutional support so that future educators can employ drama with confidence in their classrooms. This paper demonstrates the didactic value of drama, which can effectively prepare reflective, empathetic and communicative educators who can meet the current demands of language education by tying together theoretical underpinnings, empirical data, and practical suggestions.

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A corpus linguistic analysis of gendered language and power dynamics in early 20th century movie dialogues

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Abstract
This study examines how gendered power dynamics are constructed through language in early twentieth-century English-language cinema. Focusing on films produced between 1920 and 1949—a period defined by entrenched patriarchal ideals—the research analyzes the representation of male and female characters in cinematic dialogue. Utilizing a corpus of 10 to 15 culturally significant film scripts (approximately 200,000 words), the analysis employs AntConc 4.2.0 for frequency counts, keyword extractions, collocation analyses, and concordance examinations to systematically identify gendered linguistic patterns. The findings indicate that both male and female characters are frequently described with positive evaluative adjectives such as "good," "great," and "nice." However, their negative portrayals diverge markedly. Female characters are disproportionately targeted with sexually explicit or objectifying slurs (e.g., "fat slut," "bitch"), whereas criticism of male characters typically emphasizes behavior, status, or competence using terms such as "killer," "genius," and "trucker." Additionally, occupational nouns associated with men (e.g., "businessman," "doctor") highlight agency and professional identity, while comparable terms for female characters are often gender-marked or diminutive (e.g., "PR girl," "lady"). These recurring lexical and grammatical features serve to reinforce and perpetuate contemporary gender ideologies, casting men as active, dominant agents and women as subjects of evaluative judgment rooted in appearance or emotion. The study's corpus-driven approach reveals how cinematic language functioned not only as a reflection but also as a mechanism for the normalization and transmission of prevailing gender hierarchies. In offering empirical evidence of linguistic gender bias in early film dialogue, this research advances understanding in media discourse analysis, feminist linguistics, and historical corpus studies. It underscores the crucial role of language in the (re)production of social norms and power structures in popular media.

Keywords*: gendered power dynamics, early twentieth-century cinema, film dialogue, corpus linguistics, patriarchal ideology, linguistic representation, evaluative adjectives, media discourse analysis, feminist linguistics*

Introduction

Language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a powerful social instrument that reflects and maintains societal norms, ideologies, and power structures. In cultural artifacts like films, spoken dialogue is a crucial site for the (re)production of social meanings, particularly those related to gender and authority. Cinematic discourses often reflected prevailing ideologies that positioned men and women in unequal social roles during the early 20th century, when gender norms and deeply rooted patriarchal values were prevalent. Thus, studying early film language can facilitate understanding the linguistic construction and cultural transmission of gendered power dynamics.

A methodical and empirical framework for examining such phenomena is provided by corpus linguistics. By using techniques like frequency counts, concordance analysis, and collocation studies, the corpus linguistic approach enables researchers to identify linguistic patterns in sizable text collections, claim Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie (2012). These techniques allow one to determine the distribution and usage of specific linguistic forms among gendered speakers, such as pronouns, modal verbs, or evaluative adjectives. Paul Baker has highlighted the importance of corpus-based methods for investigating how language encodes gender ideologies, pointing out that corporation enables researchers to go beyond anecdotal assertions to more broadly applicable conclusions supported by evidence.

Linguists and feminists have long studied how gender is portrayed in language. In her seminal work Language and Woman's Place, Robin Lakoff made the case that characteristics of women's language, such as indirectness, hedges, and tag questions, tend to portray female speakers as less assertive and authoritative than their male counterparts. Deborah Tannen later developed this viewpoint by arguing that different cultural expectations are reflected in the conversational styles of men and women, with men typically using language to establish dominance and women using it to establish rapport. When incorporated into movie dialogue, these linguistic variations serve to reinforce gendered expectations among viewers in addition to reflecting societal attitudes.

Through her concept of the "male gaze," Laura Mulvey argued that classical Hollywood cinema constructs women as objects of male desire and narrative control, bringing the ideological implications of such portrayals into stark relief. Recent studies, like those edited by Roberta Piazza, Monika Bednarek, and Fabio Rossi (2011), have demonstrated that linguistic analysis can provide equally compelling insights into how films construct gendered subjectivities, even though Mulvey's work was primarily focused on visual representation. Notwithstanding these developments, there are still relatively few corpus-based studies that concentrate exclusively on early 20th-century film, which was a pivotal time in the evolution of linguistic and narrative conventions in the medium.

By performing a corpus linguistic analysis of gendered language and power dynamics in English-language film dialogues from 1920 to 1949, this study aims to close that gap. It examines male and female characters' linguistic representations of agency, authority, and relational power. Three primary questions are the focus of the study: (1) How do male and female characters express power and submission differently through language? (2) In cross-gender interactions, which recurrent lexical and grammatical characteristics indicate dominance or deference? (3) What larger gender ideologies of the early 20th century are reflected in these patterns?

This study intends to advance the overlapping domains of media discourse analysis, gender studies, and corpus linguistics by utilizing both quantitative trends and qualitative interpretations. Ultimately, it makes the case that early film dialogues provided a critical lens through which to study the cultural politics of language in cinema by reflecting and influencing public perceptions of gender roles and power structures.

Theoretical background

This study is grounded in the combined theoretical perspectives of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and feminist linguistics to explore how gender and power are constructed through language in early twentieth-century film dialogue. Baker and Egbert (2016) and Sunderland (2021) argue that language is not simply a means of communication but a socially and ideologically embedded practice that reflects, reinforces, or challenges dominant cultural norms. In films, how characters speak serves as a cultural script, shaping and transmitting ideas about gender roles to viewers.

Corpus linguistics provides a robust empirical framework for studying linguistic patterns in large datasets, allowing researchers to uncover recurring lexical and grammatical features that might be missed through traditional qualitative methods. As Marchi and Taylor (2018) and Brezina (2018) emphasize, corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) enable the systematic identification of statistically significant language patterns aligned with social ideologies, especially in media contexts. They highlight how techniques such as collocation analysis, keyword extraction, and concordance examination make it possible to trace how gendered language operates across different characters and narrative situations in film scripts.

Feminist linguistics, building on foundational theories, emphasizes intersectionality and the role of media in shaping gendered identities. Mustapha and Mills (2021), along with Sunderland (2021), stress that gendered media discourse often reflects complex power relations through linguistic strategies, including hedges, intensifiers, evaluative adjectives, and objectifying metaphors. Media discourse analysis further situates films as cultural artifacts that encode and circulate gender ideologies, contributing to the normalization of power hierarchies through recurrent tropes and narrative devices, as Bednarek (2023) and Piazza (2019) noted.

Recent research has expanded on these fundamental viewpoints by combining critical feminist corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), meaning is created by the interaction of several semiotic resources, including gesture, sound, and image, which are especially important in the cinematic medium. Continuing this tradition, O'Halloran (2013) highlighted that instead of treating language as a single channel, multimodal analysis offers a framework for comprehending how discourse functions across various modes in combination. By methodically investigating the ways in which gender ideologies are ingrained and perpetuated through common language practices, Lazar (2017) furthered critical feminist discourse studies. The use of corpus linguistic tools to uncover subtle yet ubiquitous gendered discourses in large datasets was illustrated by Baker and Levon (2015). Gill (2017) emphasized how the media uses overt and covert representational techniques to maintain inequality, highlighting the importance of critical feminist viewpoints in media analysis. When combined, these methods enable a more complex framework for the current study, placing linguistic evidence in the context of early film's multimodal environment as well as word choice and syntax patterns. This provides a more comprehensive explanation of the creation and dissemination of gendered meanings.

By integrating these theoretical approaches, this study investigates how early film dialogue functioned to reflect and reproduce prevailing gender norms, providing empirical insight into the subtle linguistic mechanisms operating in cinematic texts to shape cultural understandings of gender and authority.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive and exploratory corpus-based design to examine how gendered language shapes power dynamics in English-language film dialogue from the early 20th century. Film scripts from 1920 to 1949 were used to create a specialized corpus; selections were made based on cultural significance, representation of both genders, and the availability of complete dialogue. The corpus used in the study comprises 12 English-language films from both Hollywood and British studios. These films were selected based on specific inclusion criteria, which included the following: (a) they were made in English, (b) they received widespread distribution or critical acclaim at the time, and (c) they had enough dialogue for in-depth linguistic analysis. Movies with little spoken content focused on musical performances or visual spectacle were excluded. The corpus encompasses various genres, including historical narratives, comedies, romantic dramas, and adventure films. To ensure text comparability, word counts for each film were normalized to between 8,000 and 10,000 words. By taking these steps, the corpus is guaranteed to be representative of English-language films from the early 20th century, encompassing a wide variety of gendered linguistic patterns.

A total of 150,000 to 200,000 words of dialogue were gathered, cleaned for analysis, annotated by speaker gender, and formatted into plain text files. AntConc 4.2.0's frequency counts, keyword extraction, collocation analysis, and concordance (KWIC) functions were used to analyze lexical and grammatical features that reflect authority, submission, and relational power. Researchers can track the distribution of gendered terms, intensifiers, role nouns, and evaluative adjectives across characters by using the KWIC function, which makes it possible to identify recurrent lexical patterns and their immediate co-texts systematically. To align theoretically informed questions—like those about agency, dominance, and difference with empirical data, KWIC highlights recurring patterns. This allows for interpretive judgment to contextualize semantic and pragmatic nuances. To guarantee that the findings fairly reflect the broader corpus, sample data were chosen at random from each movie, and the texts were not altered beyond the necessary readability cleaning.

The methodology combines theoretically guided interpretation with corpus-based quantification, enabling a nuanced investigation of how early cinematic discourse is constructed and reflects historical gender ideologies and a robust empirical assessment of linguistic indicators of gendered power.

Results and discussion

The main conclusions of a corpus-driven study of gendered language and power relations in early 20th-century film dialogues are presented and interpreted in this section. In order to determine how language reflects societal attitudes toward gender, authority, and interpersonal interaction within the cinematic discourse of the era, the study examined linguistic patterns across a variety of lexical and grammatical categories using AntConc as the primary analytical tool.

The analysis, which was based on script data taken from classic movie dialogues, concentrated on five main areas: gender-related lexical choices, the use of imperatives and modal verbs to convey power, collocational patterns linked to gendered referents, discourse markers related to affirmations and interruptions, and sentiment-laden language used to describe male and female characters. In order to uncover subtle and frequently noticeable patterns of gender representation, each of these categories was investigated using keyword frequency, collocate analysis, and concordance line interpretation.

This section focuses on the lexical choices surrounding male and female characters, specifically the words used to describe or to refer to them, to analyze how gendered language appears in film dialogues from the early 20th century. To find patterns of association, gendered pronouns like he, she, him, and her, as well as role nouns like man, woman, girl, and sailor, were examined using concordance and collocate analysis in AntConc. The aim is to determine if specific adjectives and nouns are more commonly associated with one gender and contribute to recurrent representations of femininity or masculinity. The first table illustrates how female characters are frequently framed in early cinematic discourse by listing the most common adjectives and nouns that co-occur with the pronoun "she."

Table 1. Common adjectives and nouns associated with female characters

Descriptor Type	Lexical Item	Example Concordance Lines
Positive	good	"she's a good teacher", "she's a good girl", "she's a good skater", "she's a good climber", "she's a good kid"
	great	"she's a great chick", "she's a great girl", "she's a great ship", "she's a great kid"
	lovely	"she's a lovely girl", "she's a lovely lady"
	nice	"she's a very nice girl", "she's a nice girl"
	beautiful / beauty	"she's a beauty!", "oh, she's beautiful"
	smart / intelligent	"chic, smart, intelligent"
	funny	"she's funny", "she's a really funny character", "she's a funny woman"
	talented / skilled	"she's a fantastic writer", "she's a linguist", "she's a clairvoyant", "she's a photographer"
	hard worker	"she's a very hard worker"
	delicate	"she's a very delicate flower", "she's a delicate flower"
Negative / Neutral	little	"she's a little too tall", "she's a little dingy", "she's a little hairy", "she's a little put out"

	dull	"she's a very dull girl"
	fat slut	"she's a fat slut" (appears twice)
	bitch	"she's a bitch like all the others"
	junkie	"she's a fuckin' junkie"
	cunt	"she's a fucking cunt"
	glitch	"she's a glitch"
	gold-digger	"she's a gold-digger"
	hooker	"she's a hooker"
	killer	"she's a killer"
	liar	"she's a liar"
	liberal	"she's a liberal"
	lump of clay	"she's a lump of clay"
	monkey	"she's a monkey", "she's a bright little monkey"
	murderess	"she's a murderess"
	rascal	"she's a rascal"
	child abuser	"she's a child abuser"

According to the data, there is a strong preference for positive adjectival collocations with "she." Words like "good," "great," "lovely," and "nice" are commonly used. This implies that female characters are generally framed positively, especially when discussing their innate qualities or younger age (e.g., "good girl", "good kid", "great girl", "great kid", "lovely girl"). Specific qualities like "smart" and "intelligent" indicate a recognition of mental acuity, while "funny" denotes comedic or entertaining qualities, in addition to general positivity. The word "delicate" is used frequently, highlighting a semantic field associated with gentleness or fragility.

In contrast, a subset of adjectives shows representations that are less flattering or even disparaging. Often used to describe physical size or a perceived minor quality, "little" modifies "she" ("a little too tall," "a little dingy," "a little hairy," "a little put out," "a little beige," "a little bit worn out," "a little small"). Explicit derogatory terms that emphasize extremely harmful and frequently offensive characterizations, such as "fat slut," "bitch," "junkie," and "cunt," are more concerning. A less favorable portrayal is also influenced by adjectives like "liar," "headstrong," and "dull." The nouns that come right after "she's a" frequently specify the character's function, personality, or sense of self. Nominal collocations like "teacher," "girl," "kid," and "lady" are frequently used. These terms mainly refer to typical roles in society or stages of development.

The corpus also includes occupational and professional nouns that follow “she’s a,” including “writer,” “doctor,” “climber,” “photographer,” “linguist,” and “PR girl.” This lexical category suggests that women were, to some degree, represented as competent professionals in a range of skilled fields in early film scripts. However, the use of "PR girl" and the continued gender-marking of roles (e.g., using "girl" rather than "woman" in professional contexts) indicate that female professional identity was frequently linguistically infantilized or diminished. Even in progressive frameworks, the co-occurrence of professional terms with the pronoun "she" reveals a complex discursive space where women are recognized as capable but frequently marked by gendered qualifiers or diminutives, reinforcing traditional expectations.

Along with occupational identities, the corpus focuses on a broad range of character and personality-related nouns related to “she.” For example, “babe,” “beauty,” “chick,” “looker,” and “big girl” emphasize physical attractiveness, femininity, or emotional tone. Although these nominal collocates have a descriptive purpose, they also exhibit evaluative bias, reflecting the common practice of judging female characters by their appearance or behavior. In contrast to the professional or action-oriented collocates more frequently found in the male character analysis, these patterns imply a semantic preference for objectifying or aestheticizing representations of women. Individualized or localized portrayals are also facilitated by using abstract identifiers like "character" and regionally coded nouns like "New Englander," though these instances seem less familiar.

The variety of figurative, abstract, or metaphorical nouns used to describe female characters is the most linguistically illuminating pattern. From a discourse-analytic standpoint, these nominal collocates—which include "blank page," "controller," "device," "glitch," "fantasy," "godsend," "liar," "murderess," and "lump of clay", act as metaphors of identity, projecting intricate ideological frames onto female characters. Some adjectives, like "fantasy" or "godsend," romanticize the female character by implying desire or salvation. Others, such as "murderess," "gold-digger," "liar," "hooker," and "criminal," attribute transactional value, social threat, or moral deviance. These labels, which portray women as deviant agents of destruction or virtuous objects of admiration, exhibit a high degree of semantic polarity. Early cinematic narratives relied on a binary framework for female identity, as this linguistic polarization demonstrates: the angelic ideal versus the dangerous other.

Furthermore, the erasure of agency is indicated by the use of inanimate or dehumanizing nouns like "device," "glitch," and "lump of clay," which metaphorically reduce female characters to systems or objects. The discursive strategies of objectification, in which women are linguistically deprived of their autonomy and portrayed as passive or dysfunctional entities, are indicated by these forms of nominalization. This is consistent with critical feminist linguistics, which contends that lexical and grammatical decisions mirror larger power dynamics and frequently use nuanced language to reproduce gender hierarchies.

The corpus's representation of female characters is complicated and occasionally contradictory, as evidenced by the linguistic patterns found around the word "she." Positive reinforcement is prevalent, especially for younger or more well-liked characters, emphasizing qualities like goodness, talent, and pleasantness. This implies a normative baseline of favorable characteristics frequently attributed to female characters. However, the usage of extremely disparaging and objectifying terms also indicates a darker linguistic undercurrent in the dataset. The co-occurrence of phrases like "fat slut" and "lovely lady" in the same corpus highlights a wide variety of female representations, some of which may be stereotypical. This duality may reveal underlying societal biases present in the source material, or it may represent different narrative functions, such as antagonists or idealized characters.

In summary, the nominal collocates of “she's a” reveal a broad and ideologically charged spectrum of female representation. While there is evidence of occupational and professional identity, it is frequently counterbalanced by terms that objectify, infantilize, or moralize. These patterns, identified through collocate frequency and concordance analysis, demonstrate that early film language encoded gendered norms through what women did and what they were called. The intersection of descriptive, figurative, and evaluative nouns constructs femininity as both socially productive and symbolically loaded, serving as a powerful tool in the cinematic articulation of gender.

On the other hand, the second table illustrates how male characters are frequently framed in early cinematic discourse by listing the most common adjectives and nouns that co-occur with the pronoun "he."

Table 2. Common adjectives and nouns associated with male character

Descriptor Type	**Lexical Item**	**Example Concordance Lines**
Positive	good	"he's a good one", "he's a good egg", "he's a good papa", "he's a good driver", "he's a good payer", "he's a good man"
		"he's a good boy", "he's a good little piggy", "he's a good frog", "he's a good guy"

	great	"he's a great guy", "he's a great army leader", "he's a great kid", "he's a great kisser", "he's a great milliner"
	jolly good fellow	"he's a jolly good fellow"
	nice	"he's a nice man", "he's a nice guy"
	smart	"he's a pretty smart hombre"
	talented / skilled	"he's a real gardener", "he's a real businessman", "he's a real stud", "he's a real operator"
		"he's a very gifted genius", "he's a genius"
Negative / Neutral	little	"he's a little sod", "he's a little psycho", "he's a little confused", "he's a little preoccupied"
		"he's a little dirty", "he's a little disgruntled", "he's a little out of sorts", "he's a little busy"
	dangerous	"he's a very dangerous guy", "he's a dangerous wizard"
	suspicious	"he's a very suspicious character"
	fucking	"he's a fucking psycho", "he's a fucking liar", "he's a fucking trucker", "he's a fucking doctor", "he's a fucking hick"
	bastard liar	"he's a bastard liar"
	nut	"he's a nut"

Similar to the results of the “she” analysis, the lexical patterns surrounding the pronoun “he” shows a generally positive baseline in the representation of male characters. Descriptors like "good," "great," and "nice" often co-occur with male referents, creating an impression of general likeability, social acceptability, and moral sufficiency. These words serve as positive evaluative adjectives that support the normative framing of male characters in the story as trustworthy, kind, or admirable individuals. A semantic prosody, or the propensity for certain lexical items to be surrounded by positively charged language, is reflected in the recurrence of these positive collocates from a corpus linguistic perspective. This prosody subtly directs the viewer's interpretation of the male character's integrity or worth.

The use of descriptors that highlight physical size, social standing, or implied dominance is a more pronounced linguistic pattern seen in male portrayals. In phrases like "big man," "big boy," and "big guy," the adjective "big" frequently indicates masculine authority, maturity, or social influence in addition to physical stature. This reinforces the gendered ideology that links men to strength, leadership, and institutional or spatial power. Furthermore, nouns like "stud" and "operator" further encode male characters as strategically adept or sexually competent, roles that support hegemonic masculinity. These word choices imply that male characters are expected to perform, dominate, and succeed in relational or public spheres in addition to acting.

Professional and competent identities are the focus of another important lexical domain. Occupational nouns like “driver,” “businessman,” “gardener,” “trucker,” “doctor,” and even “milliner” (a less gendered profession) index male characters as agents within skilled or labor systems. These terms add to a larger semantic field of competence, expertise, and productivity when combined with modifiers like "real" (e.g., "he's a real businessman") or evaluative nouns like "genius." From a linguistic perspective, this illustrates how occupational nouns are frequently chosen alongside intensifying adjectives to establish narrative authority or social legitimacy.

There is also a discernible trend of hostile or dangerous portrayals in contrast to these capable and commanding ones. Negatively charged terms like “dangerous guy,” “dangerous wizard,” “psycho,” “killer,” “liar,” and “monster” are commonly used to describe male characters. These lexical choices suggest a narrative trope in which men are positioned as villains or disruptors, in addition to constructing individual male characters as threats. This illustrates the dichotomy in male representation: either men are dangerous and dominant, or they are dominant and admirable, according to discourse analysis. This dual positioning lends credence to the idea that narrative development revolves around male power, whether it be utilized in a positive or negative way.

On the other hand, specific lexical patterns depict male characters' frailty or small imperfections. When the adjective "little" is used frequently with descriptors like "confused," "preoccupied," "dirty," or "disgruntled," it tends to emphasize fleeting emotional or physical states. Instead of referring to deep-rooted character defects, these descriptors imply temporary slip-ups or imperfections. This suggests a collocational context in corpus linguistics where "little" serves as a diminutive or mitigating marker, reducing the force of criticism and maintaining the character's more general positive framing. Without completely undermining their power or ability, such depictions may humanize male characters and provide relatable moments.

Importantly, explicit derogatory terms like “fucking psycho,” “fucking liar,” “fucking trucker,” and “fucking hick” are frequently used. These terms are harsh, but they tend to target behavior, profession, or regional identity rather than sexual objectification or bodily judgment, which are more common in the lexical portrayal of female characters. This difference highlights the gendered asymmetry in derogation: men are criticized through the prisms of aggression, dishonesty, or class, whereas women are more frequently characterized in terms of morality or beauty. According to linguistic theory, the use of intensifiers like "fucking" heightens narrative urgency and emotional impact, but they are frequently motivated by power struggles or social conflict rather than objectification.

Finally, relational and social role nouns like “man,” “papa,” “boy,” “child,” “guy,” and “friend” are used to reinforce male identity consistently. These nouns anchor male characters in roles that are societal, familial, or peer-based, which helps to create a stable identity schema that defines them as both individuals and as holders of relational status. Other or non-dominant gendered expressions are marginalized as a result of the discursive normalization of masculinity, which is facilitated by the regular reinforcement of male identity through role-specific nouns.

The lexical context of "he" in early 20th-century cinematic dialogues reveals a diverse range of masculine representation, from capable and valiant to flawed and hazardous. Corpus linguistic analysis demonstrates how evaluative adjectives, occupational nouns, and recurring patterns of co-occurrence combine to create a complex yet ideologically coherent representation of men as key players in action, power, and narrative control.

Further understanding of the construction of gendered power dynamics in early cinematic dialogue can be gained by examining pragmatic elements like turn-taking, interruptions, and modality in addition to lexical patterns. Tannen's (1990) observations of conversational power asymmetries between men and women are consistent with the linguistic enactment of dominance in which female characters are often interrupted by male counterparts or have their turns truncated. The use of modal verbs like "must," "should," or "could" to express modality further emphasizes the disparities in agency: female characters' modals typically convey obligation or uncertainty, in line with Lakoff's (1975) description of women's language as more tentative and deferential, whereas male characters normally use deontic modals to issue directives or assert control. Mulvey's (1975) notion of the "male gaze" is expanded upon by these interactional patterns, which show that power hierarchies are ingrained in spoken discourse structure, narrative focus, and camera placement. The researcher could track patterns of turn-taking interruptions and modal usage throughout the corpus while maintaining the empirical foundation of the analysis, using concordance and collocation functions in AntConc (Baker, 2014), making it easier to identify these pragmatic phenomena systematically. By placing linguistic behavior within larger sociocultural frameworks, the study demonstrates how early film dialogues use both lexical choice and interactional structure to operationalize and normalize gendered hierarchies.

Conclusion

Both the concordance analysis of "he" and the earlier analysis of "she" show different and overlapping linguistic patterns in how male and female characters are portrayed in the corpus. Positive attributes are heavily emphasized for both male and female characters, with the terms "good," "great," and "nice" frequently used to describe both sexes. This points to a general trend in the text to favorably depict heroes or well-liked characters of any gender.

Positive and negative portrayals are linked to different semantic fields, though. For female characters, physical appearance is emphasized a lot ("beauty," "knockout," "pretty") and is linked to gentleness or fragility ("delicate flower"). The "she" dataset includes highly explicit and objectifying derogatory terms like "fat slut," "bitch," "junkie," and "cunt," even though competence is emphasized ("good teacher," "fantastic writer," "linguist," "doctor," "journalist," "photographer," "psychic"). This suggests a representation in which female characters are frequently assessed based on their physical characteristics and are subjected to highly demeaning language when portrayed in a negative light. For male characters, size, implied strength, and influence become more important ("big man," "big boy," "big guy"). Professional roles also often emphasize competence ("good driver," "real gardener," "real businessman," "genius"). Male characters are frequently portrayed negatively by using language that indicates peril, violence, or dishonesty ("dangerous," "psycho," "killer," "monster," "liar"). Although strong, these terms are typically used to describe actions, intent, or mental states rather than being objectifying or sexually explicit, as is the case with female characters. Male characters are more likely to use the "fucking" intensifier, which gives negative descriptions a rough, combative tone.

A variety of positive and negative traits are portrayed for both male and female characters, and both are portrayed in professional and competent roles. Nonetheless, underlying gendered biases are suggested by the qualitative variations in the language used. In addition to being subjected to extremely objectifying and sexually charged disparaging language, female characters are more frequently described in terms of their appearance. Power, agency, physical presence (size/strength), and the ability to do both good and serious harm are more often used to define male characters. In character construction, this linguistic divergence reflects broader societal tendencies where men's value is linked to their impact and capabilities, while women's value is sometimes linked to their appearance.

By applying this analysis to modern media, researchers have found that discourse and narrative framing still contain subtle instances of gender asymmetry. For example, Gill (2017) contends that these disparities uphold cultural beliefs that associate men with competence and authority, whereas women are frequently evaluated based on their appearance or roles in relationships. Similarly, Smith and Cook (2008) point out that while overt stereotyping has decreased, gendered perceptions in contemporary film and television are still shaped by the distribution of dialogue, pragmatic dominance, and evaluative language. These results imply that the linguistic patterns found in early 20th-century films are not only relics of the past but also still have an impact on how media portrayals are made today.

In conclusion, the linguistic examination of gendered pronouns in movie dialogue offers important new perspectives on how gender identities are constructed in the media. The enduring nature of these trends emphasizes the necessity of continuous critical analysis of media language usage to advance fair and complex portrayals of all genders.

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DYCIan Words: A Tool for Language and Literacy Development – a book review

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In today's increasingly globalized and information-driven world, proficiency in language and communication is fundamental for both academic success and personal development. DYCIan Words, authored by Mr. Michael S. Yanga, the President of Dr. Yanga's Colleges Inc. (DYCI), is a four-volume series of vocabulary booklets specifically designed for junior high school students, spanning Grade 7 to Grade 10. Each volume is carefully structured to provide progressive development in comprehension and lexical knowledge. Mr. Yanga, a recognized language enthusiast and educational leader, authored the series as part of his broader commitment to improving English language proficiency among learners, combining both pedagogical expertise and personal passion.

Each volume of DYCIan Words is organized into three interrelated sections: (1) short passages embedding curated vocabulary, (2) exercises on correct usage, and (3) idiomatic expressions with contextual explanations. The initial section engages students in reading passages designed to introduce unfamiliar words in meaningful contexts, facilitating inferential comprehension and active engagement with new vocabulary. The second section provides exercises that reinforce the correct application of newly acquired vocabulary within syntactically accurate sentences, fostering structural and semantic understanding. The third section presents idiomatic expressions, illustrating culturally embedded uses of language and thereby enhancing learners' awareness of linguistic nuances beyond literal meanings. Collectively, these sections provide a comprehensive and scaffolded approach to language acquisition, guiding learners from recognition through application to cultural and contextual literacy.

In terms of the Educational Role of Language (ERL) framework, the design of DYCIan Words aligns closely with multiple strands. The series supports the major strand of Language and Education by serving as a structured instructional tool for vocabulary and comprehension enhancement. It also contributes to Language and Cognitive Development, as learners engage in higher-order cognitive processes such as inference, application, and synthesis within contextualized language exercises. Furthermore, the inclusion of idiomatic expressions addresses Language and Intercultural Communication, fostering learners' understanding of culturally mediated meanings. The series additionally engages minor ERL strands, including Language and Literacy, through the systematic development of reading comprehension and vocabulary, and Language and Social Interaction, by equipping learners with the linguistic skills necessary for effective communication in both academic and everyday contexts. As such, DYCIan Words exemplifies a resource that integrates cognitive, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of language learning.

The pedagogical effectiveness of DYCIan Words has been empirically validated. According to Dela Cruz and Vendivel (2025), the series significantly improved comprehension and vocabulary skills among junior high school students at DYCI. Pre-test data indicated that most learners initially demonstrated average to above-average levels of comprehension and vocabulary. Following the intervention, post-test results revealed substantial gains, with a notable increase in the proportion of students achieving excellent comprehension and a marked reduction in the below-average category. Statistical analyses further corroborated these findings. Paired-samples t-tests indicated significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores for both comprehension ($t = 15.250$, $p < .001$) and vocabulary ($t = 8.111$, $p < .001$), providing strong evidence of the intervention's positive impact. Additionally, a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.374$, $p = 0.001$) was observed between post-test comprehension and vocabulary scores. Linear regression analysis further demonstrated that vocabulary scores significantly influenced comprehension outcomes ($F = 40.679$, $p < .001$; $B = 0.384$), highlighting the integral relationship between lexical knowledge and reading comprehension. These results underscore DYCIan Words as an evidence-based educational resource with measurable impact on junior high school learners' language proficiency.

Among its strengths, DYCIan Words demonstrates a thoughtful, progressive design across four volumes, scaffolding skills development from Grade 7 through Grade 10. Its structured approach, combining narrative and expository passages, exercises, and idiomatic expressions, promotes comprehensive skill-building in vocabulary, comprehension, and cultural literacy. Authorship by Mr. Yanga adds both credibility and inspirational value, reflecting a fusion of personal passion and professional expertise. Additionally, empirical validation of the series enhances its relevance and applicability within educational settings.

However, there are areas for potential improvement. The vocabulary could be expanded to include discipline-specific or academic terms to prepare students for advanced study better. Idiomatic expressions might benefit from additional cultural or historical annotations to provide richer contextual understanding. Moreover, incorporating a broader range of genres, such as persuasive and expository texts alongside narratives, could expose learners to varied registers and purposes within English, further enhancing reading comprehension and critical literacy skills.

In conclusion, DYCIan Words is a meticulously designed, research-informed, and highly practical series that addresses the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of language learning. Its multi-volume structure ensures systematic skill development, and its empirical validation confirms its effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary and comprehension among junior high school learners. The series contributes meaningfully to the ERL framework by integrating structured instruction, cognitive engagement, and cultural literacy, making it a valuable resource for students, educators, and researchers alike. By combining passion, scholarship, and evidence-based design, DYCIan Words exemplifies how educational tools can advance language development while providing avenues for ongoing research and application in diverse educational contexts.

Reflections on language and literacy teaching in the age of modernization and social media disruptions: a report

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Abstract
Language and literacy instruction among schools is not as easy as it was before. Perceived challenges and transitions are experienced by teachers themselves such as attention span of learners, complexity of tools and technologies, and confusion brought about by the ill effects of globalization. Hence, this perspective paper aims to respond to the challenges by offering reflective and thoughtful ideas that may alleviate or lessen the perceived burdens. Through powerful and effective critical introspection, the language and literacy teachers can squarely handle the tough situations in the classroom context. It is evident that more learners are attached to social media interaction and socialization that both of their affective and cognitive aspects are disrupted. When they are tasked to do their homework, many could not beat or follow the deadline of submission due to lack of time on their part to finish the assigned task. Moreover, learners are spending more time on playing online games and socializing with peers through messaging and other applications.

Introduction

In the age of social media and technology-centered platforms, language and literacy teachers are challenged by the predominant issues and concerns that hamper the education process such as lack of focus/concentration among students, rapid evolution of machines for teaching, past-paced movements of ideas, technological dependence of numerous employees and so much more. More than ever, learners should not only take language lessons for the sole purpose of passing the course or get a high mark, but emphasis should be realized and pondered on by them leading to the application of language skills in actual workplace or worksite. It is a challenge for the language and literacy teachers to create a forceful, engaging, and supportive learning environment that can unleash the skills of learners as they develop and foster eagerness and enthusiasm to incorporate the (language) skills.

How does language teaching serve as an effective tool to spark interest of learners driving them towards embarking on the real world and fixing future problems using the skills they have developed and acquired.

The questions and concerns about language and literacy teaching have ceaselessly stressed-out teachers but answers to the problems have yet to be probed and proven effective.

How do language and literacy teachers facilitate quality language instruction and how can they make students realize the importance and place of language in their lives especially when they reach job-hunting stage?

It has been turning into bigger changes as years pass by. Now that artificial intelligence is around and emerged as widely used tools to gather or collect information, language teachers should be cautious of their important roles that are supposed to be irreplaceable amidst rapid rise of technology and modernity.

Literature review

In the fast face innovation and advancement in science and technology, it is pivotal that students be taught how to use the products and tools offered by digital literacy. Digital literacy is sometimes called 'new literacies' depends heavily on the traditional practices of activating stock knowledge, previewing, inferring, summarizing, and evaluating. Learners should be taught how the strategies and practices of reading can be practically applied to online learning (Gunning, 2020).

In an inquiry conducted by Dalton and Smith (2012), they opined that websites can be difficult as shown by average difficulty of 6.1 for students in grades 3-5. Further sites for learners in grades 6+ had an average readability of 8.7.

Gunning (2018) suggested NetTrekker (Knovation) which provides access to 300,000 standards-specialized digital materials that have been reviewed by experts. Articles have been assigned components that can offer read-aloud, text-to-speech, and dictionary-translation capacity and safe picture search.

Gunning also underlined the use of digital devices as powerful electronic tools in literacy learning. They are helpful in locating data, retrieving information, organizing data, composing messages, and presenting information.

The internet requires high level skills although its function and importance are highly respected and regarded. Through internet, the questions you have in mind are answered. While browsing on the internet, someone may plan his search. You can also determine the most plausible source of information. You can check if the information is reliable and accurate while determining if it is also sufficient for your study. One of the time-tested approaches that guide students when they conduct internet inquires is the WebQuest (Leu, Forzani, & Kennedy, 2014).

In producing and sharing information, reliable tools such as blogging, wikis, and podcasts can be used by teachers. A blog is a website on which the creator may periodically upload a content, having the latest content uploaded first. The striking advantage of blogs is that viewers and readers may respond by posting their comments. In addition, blogs have been very useful forums for sharing ideas and discussing issues. Many teachers who used blogs noted that they have been very helpful and motivational (Boling et al., 2008). Meanwhile, wikis can be used as a database of information such as listing scholarly books, examples of misleading agencies, glossary of concepts, findings of inquiries, and list of approved websites. Wikis can either be open or private. Finally, podcasts offer video or auditory digital files. Some of the informative and commercial organizations, such as PBS, the Discovery Channel, and the International Literacy Association, share and offer podcasts.

From the reflections of language and literacy instructors, they create actionable plans that can upgrade teaching methods, learning assessments, and empower other teachers not just in the field of ELT but also other subject areas.

Since changes and innovation have massively shaped and influenced the landscape of language and literacy instruction, language teachers may take actions to facilitate and engage in instruction more effectively without being lost. They can use technology and materials that are proven useful and functional in the literacy environment. Chat GPT and artificial intelligence would not go away, and they are around us, but we can use them in getting information. While these products of technology are useful, nothing could ever replace teachers in doing many tasks like patient and reflective research, counseling and guiding students, and flexible assessment of learning performance. Language and literacy teachers have the time and opportunity to retool and upgrade themselves by reflecting on their reflections, engaging in seminars and trainings, involvement in literacy action research, and sharing their literacy practices with other professionals.

Conclusions and reflections (insights)

The need to do critical reflections in assessing the needs of learners is crucial in the success of language and literacy teaching. In a world where innovation, modernity, globalization are prevalent, it is high time that literacy coaches and language teachers are well-oriented and adept in the linguistic issues, theories, perspectives, and practices that can shape and elevate the landscape of English language learning environment across grade levels. Gone are the days when traditional teaching was the key to educating the minds and upgrading the skills of learners. The world is characterized by complexity and disruptions today; hence, language and literacy teachers need to be prepared and cautious of their actions and through reflections and introspections, they can achieve their goals and make a difference. As global education is rapidly changing, literacy instruction is evolving in the same way. As teachers engage and live in this complex and dynamic changing learning environment, they too should be reskilled, upskilled, and leveraged. Through professional development programs, actionable plans, reflective practices, language and literacy teachers have the power to shape and nurture the language and literacy environment by fostering responsive, inclusive, equitable, and supportive classrooms. Language and literacy educators and specialists are essentially needed in this world where proliferation of fake news and misinformation is rampant and prevalent. Through collaboration and participation of practitioners and experts, problems in literacy in the age of modernization and globalization can be gradually addressed. Likewise, government should support projects and programs that aim to upgrade the capacity of teachers who are always the front runners and frontliners of literacy development and instruction. Through the reflections of language and literacy teachers, more ideas and concepts can be examined and shared that can help others achieve directions in teaching, assessment, and research. They can also tie up with other organizations to discuss issues and challenges that are connected.

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From the Middle Ages to Today: a brief manual-style excursus on teaching Russian to foreigners

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Introduction

The teaching of Russian as a foreign language has a long, complex, and surprisingly lively history, stretching from the 12^{th} century to the present day. It is not just about learning a language, but about understanding how culture, history, and political choices have shaped the way Russian has been taught to non-native speakers. Each historical period brought new needs, tools, and theoretical reflections that left their mark on manuals, teaching methods, and language pedagogy.

A fundamental contribution to understanding this evolution was made in 2005 by a research group from the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute (*Institut russkogo jazyka imeni A.S. Puškina*), led by Professor A.N. Shchukin. The team published a manual that presents a detailed excursus of the stages and developments of teaching techniques, providing a comprehensive overview of how linguistic and pedagogical knowledge has transformed over time.

According to the researchers' work, the history of Russian language teaching can be divided into three main phases: the pre-Soviet period (12^{th} century to the 1917 Revolution), the Soviet period (from the establishment of the USSR to its collapse), and the post-Soviet period, which continues to the present day. Each phase is characterized by milestones that influenced both theory and practice. This periodization considers political and socioeconomic changes that affected education, as well as advances in disciplines such as pedagogy, psychology, linguistics, sociology, and computer science, all of which played a significant role in shaping teaching methods.

Early Russian language manuals in Europe: curiosity and innovation

The first manuals for foreigners appeared in Europe between the 17th and 18th centuries, at a time when Russian began to attract interest outside its borders. One pioneer was the German Heinrich Wilhelm Ludolf, author of *Russkaja Grammatika*. Ludolf adopted an innovative approach: he did not limit himself to listing grammar rules but also included phrases and dialogues in the spoken language (*razgovornye frazy*), translated into German and Latin, so that students could practice in realistic contexts.

Moreover, the manual included geographical and cultural information: short descriptions of villages, natural landscapes, and the many ethnic groups living in Russia. These elements, seemingly secondary, actually had a pedagogical function: they allowed students to place the language in a real context and perceive it as living, rather than as a mere set of rules. Despite some grammatical errors, Ludolf's work represents a milestone in the methodology of teaching Russian to foreigners.

The 19^{th} century: from grammar-translation to the natural method

Throughout the 19^{th} century and into the early 20^{th} century, Russian language teaching was dominated by the grammar-translation approach. In this method, study revolved around grammar: students learned rules and structures, and then applied them in exercises translating from Russian to their native language and vice versa. This approach produced satisfactory results in reading and understanding texts but was less effective in oral expression.

From the mid-19^{th} century, the need to make language learning more lively and to promote spoken competence became evident. This led to the creation of the *natural method*, based on principles similar to those used in teaching children: listen, repeat, understand, and memorize. The method employed thematic phrasebooks and lexical explanations, allowing students to internalize the language through concrete situations.

At the same time, intensive methods such as the direct method, the intuitive-imitative method, and the Berlitz method were developed. The latter achieved great success in Europe and even reached Moscow, where a school was opened on the Kuznetsky Bridge. Here, grammar took a secondary role, while dialogue became the focal point of lessons. By the end of the 19th century, two methodological approaches coexisted: traditional grammar and translation on one hand, and direct, communication-centered learning on the other. These developments laid the foundations for 20th-century methods.

Russian teaching in the soviet period: pragmatism and theoretical development

After the 1917 Revolution, in the 1920s, communist universities (*Komvusy*) welcomed foreign students from across the USSR. Teaching had practical and political aims: quickly providing students with complete communicative skills, with particular attention to oral production, while also allowing specialization in literature. Texts used were often of a political or social nature, reflecting the objectives of the new regime.

From the mid-1930s, the students' native language was reintroduced through translation exercises. Teachers faced significant challenges due to inexperience and a lack of teaching tools, making it clear that a solid theoretical foundation was necessary.

In the 1940s, the ideas of L.V. Shcherba helped define language teaching as an autonomous discipline. Learning a foreign language had practical objectives: students had to be able to communicate at a threshold level with native speakers. During this period, the contrastive-conscious approach (*soznatel'no-sopostavitel'nyj podchod*) emerged, which compared the system of the foreign language with that of the students' native language to facilitate understanding and learning. Grammar, vocabulary, and syntax were studied alongside exercises and texts to develop communicative competence.

In the 1950s, this theoretical approach was applied in new manuals designed for different nationalities, taking into account linguistic particularities. In 1951, the Moscow State University established a department of Russian for foreigners, offering Russian courses and preparatory courses for university entrance exams.

In the 1960s, a communicative approach was developed: grammar was taught in functional modules designed to enhance communicative competence. Psychologists and linguists such as S.L. Rubinstein, A.A. Leontiev, and I.A. Zimnyaya laid the foundations of the communicative-active approach, focused on students' individual characteristics. Lessons included contextualized exercises, real-life dialogue situations, and collaborative work.

During this period, Beliaev's practical-conscious method (1965) became widespread, combining conscious grammar knowledge with oral practice. In the 1970s, the method was refined in its pragmatic-communicative aspects, resulting in innovative manuals such as *Russkij jazyk dlja vsech*, *Start*, and *Temp*. However, the emphasis on spoken language at the expense of written language and the reduced use of translation did not always yield optimal results.

Also in the 1970s, the Pushkin Institute provided a major theoretical contribution with two key publications: *Metodika* (1975) by Leontiev and Koroleva and *Metodicheskoe rukovodstvo dlja prepodavatelej russkogo jazyka* (1976) by Kostomarov and Mitrofanova.

The post-soviet period: innovation and technology

With the collapse of the USSR, social and technological changes profoundly influenced Russian language teaching. Intensive methods were developed, new-generation manuals were created, and multimedia tools were introduced, expanding learning possibilities. In 1990, the publishing house *Zlatoust* was founded in Saint Petersburg, dedicated to producing manuals and scientific publications on teaching

Russian as a foreign language. These developments made teaching more accessible, interactive, and closely aligned with students' contemporary needs.

Conclusion

The history of teaching Russian to foreigners is a rich and dynamic journey, marked by continuous interplay between theory and practice, innovation and tradition. From the first manuals of the 17th century to today's texts and multimedia tools, each period contributed new instruments, methods, and approaches. Today, Russian language teaching integrates diverse strategies, emphasizing oral communication, cultural understanding, and the use of technology. The manualistic excursus thus remains a vital tool for understanding how Russian language pedagogy has grown, evolved, and continues to adapt to the needs of learners.

The heritage language global think tank: collaboration across countries

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The Heritage Language Global Think Tank was formed in 2022, when a group of us realized that people in many countries are focused on and working with community-based heritage language (CBHL) schools, that we have a lot in common, and that there are many activities in which we can jointly engage to help make these schools more sustainable in all countries. We formed the group of passionate professionals from around the world involved in heritage language education (currently from 14 countries; the full list is available on the homepage), who come together regularly to generate new ideas about and seek to improve the recognition, visibility, vitality, quality, and sustainability of CBHL education programs globally. The Think Tank brings a global perspective to these goals, with a focus on global action and policy, human rights, and equity.

At the core of the work of the Think Tank participants is the ambition to ensure that multilingual students receive a high-quality language education that provides them with self-confidence, a strong sense of identity, intercultural competence, and lifelong skills that will benefit them in our increasingly globalized society. Our goals include improving the vitality of community-based heritage language programs and connecting them with mainstream education; supporting administrators and teachers in heritage language programs, who face many challenges; discovering, documenting, and sharing the most effective strategies used by heritage language program leaders; motivating students and their families to continue to use the language and develop proficiency in it; granting recognition to students for their proficiency in their heritage language; and protecting students' universal rights to study and develop high levels of proficiency in their heritage language. By sharing and comparing efforts in different regions of the world, we seek to identify activities that could be effective across many different contexts.

Pedagogical strategies in the heritage language global think tank

The Heritage Language (HL) Global Think Tank provides a platform for exchanging professional experiences, sharing information about projects, and discussing research activities related to HL education. It brings together scholars, researchers, and practitioners from around the world. It also offers targeted support for teachers, providing methodical guidance, workshops, and courses tailored to the needs of HL, foreign language, and L1 learners. The growing collaboration highlights the complexity of HL education and the importance of adapting teaching to learners' unique linguistic and cultural profiles.

One of the most common challenges in HL education is that the instructional approach must differ from mainstream teaching (Brinton et al., 2017; Montrul, 2016). HL learners occupy a unique position: they often have prior exposure to the language in home or community settings, but usually lack experience using it in formal contexts, since the HL is primarily used within the family and community. This requires providing them with specialized support in academic settings, as their language exposure differs substantially from that of learners educated exclusively through the language of instruction. In contrast, foreign language learners generally start with no prior knowledge (Benmamoun, Montrul and Polinsky, 2013). As a result, standard foreign language methodologies—such as grammar drills, vocabulary exercises, or the use of basic sociocultural phrases—do not fully meet the needs of HL learners and require careful adaptation (Kagan, Carreira and Chik, 2017; Montrul, 2016).

HL learners may have strong oral comprehension but lack formal literacy, grammatical accuracy, or domain-specific vocabulary. Proficiency levels can also vary significantly among students within the same class, even when they share a similar linguistic background. Therefore, teachers in HL schools must adopt differentiated instructional strategies. These strategies should address diverse needs, support language maintenance and development, and help students succeed in academic contexts (Cummins, 2015; Kagan, Carreira and Chik, 2017).

Specialized pedagogy for HL education also requires an understanding of cultural and linguistic identity (Brinton, Kagan and Bauckus, 2017; Valdés, 2017). Teaching materials need to reflect learners' heritage culture, enhancing motivation and engagement while reinforcing linguistic competence. According to Boccou Kestřánková and Paap (in press), teaching materials should support pedagogical strategies that consider the wide range of language proficiency levels among students within a classroom. Instruction should not focus mainly on language analysis or the expansion of peripheral vocabulary. Since HL teachers may also be volunteers without formal qualifications, it is essential to provide them with professional support and methodological guidance. With appropriate materials and continued teacher training, instruction can be better directed toward language use in contexts that HL learners commonly encounter and in which they need to use their HL. Incorporating students' cultural knowledge and linking insights between the culture of the majority education environment and the HL culture strengthens learners' identity and their relationship with the HL.

Given these factors, there is a clear need for the development of specialized pedagogical approaches, instructional strategies, and teaching materials tailored to the specific needs of HL learners. By acknowledging the unique linguistic and cultural characteristics of these learners, educational programs can more effectively support language maintenance, proficiency development, and positive identity formation (Boccou Kestřánková & Paap, in press).

Global think tank initiatives

Infographic for school leaders and parents

An infographic for school leaders and parents, 9 Myths about Heritage Language Education (Cannizaro, 2022), selected from 40 misperceptions about heritage language education, was collected from partners around the world, with responses to those misperceptions. They include:

- Multilingualism is confusing for children.

Actually, children who are properly supported can enjoy many benefits of speaking more than one language!

- Heritage language education is unnecessary. Speaking at home is enough, right?

Actually, a child who can speak fluently can still lack important skills in the heritage language.

- Heritage language education disrupts mainstream education.

Actually, children can make use of their knowledge of the heritage language to help them develop the school language.

We make an effort to ensure that all school staff and parents have access to this document, which addresses common issues that they struggle with.

International guidelines for professional practices in community-based heritage language schools

The Think Tank members have collaborated to develop and publish the *International Guidelines for Professional Practice*, with a Review Rubric that defines universal principles and good practices to guide HL programs as they seek to grow and improve. Groups of staff in a program can work together to review and evaluate all of the components of their program and make a plan for improvement.

Connecting community-based programs and public schools and universities

Although CBHL schools are a vital part of the language learning landscape, with thousands of schools teaching hundreds of languages and with students reaching high levels of proficiency in their language, they are not often recognized or valued by public schools and universities. We are seeking to change that and to create partnerships and collaborations among these sectors. One of the components of this initiative is to create a document about injustices and political pressure that some HL communities and programs are experiencing, with guidance for making improvements.

Recognizing students in community-based programs for their language proficiency

Many students in CBHLs remain in the program from a very young age (often pre-kindergarten) throughout high school and reach a level of proficiency that allows them to participate in college-level classes in the language, in their country of origin or in the United States. We are seeking ways to help programs recognize this proficiency in formal ways, including through the Global Seal of Biliteracy, in the United States the State Seals of Biliteracy, and other awards.

Developing comprehensive heritage language school networks

In the United States, the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools seeks to identify, document, connect, support, and advocate for all CBHLs, teaching all languages. We have made significant progress and hold an annual conference for leaders of these schools. This conference is in a hybrid format and has attracted international audiences.

In Europe, FOHLC Europe has organized annual conferences between 2021-2024, with topics covering "Future-proofing heritage language education," "Multilingual children and multilingual libraries," "Harvesting support for HL education," and "Rethinking incentives - how to bolster motivation". FOHLC Europe has organized two online FOHLC Cafés a year and created a blog for sharing practical and theoretical information for CBHL schools and interested audiences. FOHLC Europe has joined forces with the Think Tank and introduced a shared Heritage Language Blog.

A global call to action for heritage language education

At the occasion of the International Mother Language Day 2024, the Think Tank created a manifesto for stakeholders, such as HL pupils, families, schools, administration, libraries, policy makers, journalists and the public. In a simple way, people can commit to supporting heritage language education and schools in small and large ways. The Global Call to Action for Heritage Language Education is accompanied by a simplified checklist that makes the message of the global call to action even more accessible.

Working Groups

During the three years of its existence, the Think Tank members have participated in several working groups established informally as a response to rich discussions and identified needs. For example, the Global Call to Action, mapping of HL schools, drawing attention to racialized discriminatory news on various media, collaborations between compulsory and HL schools, and other issues have led to rich collaborations and outputs. The Global Think Tank group meets four times a year, and we report on our progress in these and other arenas. We seek to engage, encourage, and empower each other and CBHL program leaders around the world, and are inspired and guided by our Global Call to Action for Heritage Language Education.

The work of the HL Global Think Tank addresses issues that are at the core of the *ERL Journal*, the relations of heritage languages and schools, language learning and teaching, and it advocates for heritage language education as an important part of the global language education sector.

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ERL Journal – Scope Major

Key premise. **The educational role of language, reaching far beyond school(ing), is determined by multiple aspects relating to culture, methodology and/or personality**. To be suitably comprehensive, studies blending educational with linguistic studies need to comprise all these aspects.

LANGUAGE and SCHOOL	LANGUAGE and CULTURE
LANGUAGE and METHODOLOGY	LANGUAGE and PERSONALITY

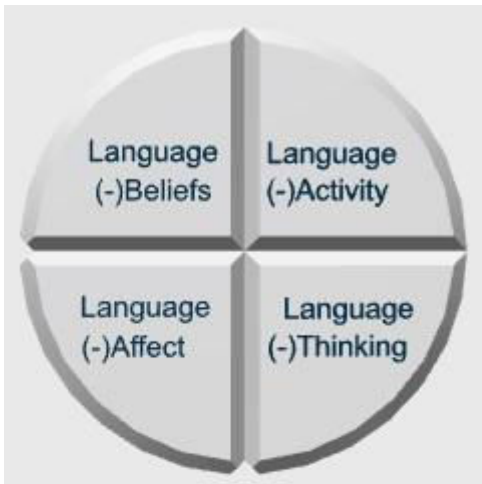
General rationale. Language lies at the heart of schooling, culture, (learning and teaching) methods, and personality – thus underlying education on the individual and on the social level. Its social existence determines its experiencing by an individual person and vice versa. Both these levels matter when it comes to learning and teaching methods as well as schooling as a whole. Socially determined and individually experienced, language shapes culture and education, and, from an individual perspective, it defines a person's place in the world and defines the world in which a person is placed.

Specific issues. Accordingly, ERL Journal welcomes papers addressing issues such as: language of schooling, bilingual education, language identity, intercultural competence, discourse analysis, children narratives, personal constructs, language in special education, transversal skills, language mediation, academic language, elicitation, plurilingual teaching, CLIL, functions of language, etc.

Expected outcome. Systematization of knowledge concerning the educational position of language; aggregation of empirical findings pertaining to social and cultural determinants of how language serves education; development of interdisciplinary educational and linguistic studies; recognition of problems calling for research and discussion of ways of putting language theories into practice.

ERL Journal – Scope Minor

Key premise. **A person's education is determined by how language operates on four levels – beliefs, activity, affect and thinking**. To be maximally educational, the experiencing of language by a person comprises these four dimensions, which implies a need for their comprehensive studies.



General rationale. How language affects a person's education depends on multiple axiological, psychomotor, affective, and cognitive factors. For instance, what a person thinks of language (e.g. on whether it is worth speaking or not) and how much a person speaks determines that person's mental faculties. Conversely, how a person understands a given issue (as well as how s/he feels about it) impacts on how interesting utterances s/he produces. Hence, there exist relationships between language and all the aforementioned educational domains.

Specific issues. Accordingly, ERL Journal welcomes papers concerning issues falling within one or more of the four domains, such as: status of language in school curricula, language of textbooks, language activity of children or grown-ups, stages of language fossilization, argumentative skills, language learning styles, verbalization of knowledge, approaches to oracy, personal experiencing of language skills, language image of the world, cognitive discourse functions, language reflectivity, etc.

Expected outcome. Collection of theoretical proposals and empirical data supporting learner-oriented educational practice; exploration of the relationship between language and four educational domains; detection of factors determining learners' language identity/personality; accumulation of data providing assistance in construction of language-grounded educational systems.

***ERL Journal** is designated for papers on cross-disciplinary, educational and linguistic, issues. It is meant to address (I) the position of language and how it is put into practice across different schools, cultures, methods and personalities, and (II) the experiencing of language by learners in terms of their language beliefs, activity, affect and cognition. ERL Journal includes theoretical and empirical papers, presenting qualitative and quantitative approaches. Resting on the overarching premise of language shaping our reality and education (assignment of meanings to the world and subject matter learnt), it ultimately aims to unravel this process and to boost the position of language in education.*

ERL Journal is international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, and double-blinded.

It is open access and follows free-of-charge policy for authors.

http://educationalroleoflanguage.org/erl-journal/