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GiST Education and Learning Research Journal

Editorial

Dr. Carlo Granados-Beltrán
Academic Vice Chancellor ÚNICA

How can EFL innovation thrive amid systemic constraints? This question guides Issue 31, which offers a concise yet diverse overview of current research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching across varied geographical and educational contexts. Although the studies come from realities in countries as diverse as Colombia, Iran, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and China, they share a common concern: understanding and improving EFL students' learning processes while analyzing the role of pedagogical practices, educational policies, and teacher training in that endeavor.

All contributions explore strategies that strengthen student engagement and foster skill transfer across reading, writing, speaking, and critical literacy. Approaches such as the Flipped Instruction Model (FIM), Data-Driven Learning (DDL), culturally oriented texts, sketchbooks, and the pedagogical use of AI chatbots demonstrate their potential to bridge theory and practice. These innovations, however, only succeed when aligned with institutional, material, and sociocultural realities.

Systemic barriers—national exams focused on grammar, large class sizes, low salaries, lack of authentic materials, insufficient preparation for inclusion, and limited knowledge about supporting students with visual disabilities—remain significant obstacles to implementation.

Technology and Emerging Pedagogies

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into language teaching is a recurring theme. In "Chatbot-Driven Writing Practice: A Boon or a Bust for EFL Learners?", Emrah Ekmekçi and Eylül Karabulut examine the impact of general-purpose chatbots on L2 writing, signaling a shift toward technology-driven learning. Similarly, Laura Ordoñez reviews B. Mairéad Pratschke's book introducing "Generativism", a model that redefines the relationship between teachers, students, and digital tools—an approach that could reshape classroom dynamics.

Methodological Innovations

In Iran, "Effects of Flipped Model of Instruction on Reading Comprehension and Attitude of Iranian Non-English Majors" by Samaneh Bahrami demonstrates that the FIM significantly improves reading comprehension and attitudes among university students, using audio files as pre-class resources for accessible, "on-the-go" learning. Complementing this, "Effects of Data-Driven Learning Approach on EFL Learners' Speaking Engagement" by Getasew Chanie and Amare Tesfie Birhan shows how DDL fosters active oral participation, reinforcing the value of learner autonomy.

Policy-Practice Gaps and Inclusion

The disconnect between policy and practice is evident in "We Believe in CLT, But…': Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Implementation Challenges" by Alireza Karbalaei, which reveals that despite official adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), systemic constraints—grammar-focused exams, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient training, and low salaries—limit its implementation.

Inclusion emerges as another critical theme. "Pedagogical Mediation for Visually Impaired Students" by May Ling González-Ruiz, Ana Cristina Solís Solís, and Lindsay Chaves-Fernández analyzes strategies in Costa Rican universities to support visually impaired learners, underscoring the global need for inclusive frameworks. Similarly, "Ready or Not? Preparedness of Pre-service EFL Teachers to Inclusive Education: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China" by Erkan Yüce, Olufemi Timothy Adigun, Meruyert Seitova, Zeynep Çetin Köroğlu, and Yongliang Wang examines future teachers' readiness for inclusive education across diverse contexts.

Cultural Contextualization and Critical Literacy

Context-sensitive materials remain essential. In Ethiopia, 'Augmenting Students' Reading Comprehension Using Source Culture-Oriented Texts: Eighth-Grade in Focus' by Atirse Awago Atumo, Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam, and Abbi Lemma Wodajo demonstrates that culturally grounded texts enhance comprehension and engagement when traditional materials feel distant. Likewise, "EFL Learners' Critical Literacy Development Using Sketchbooks" by Deisi Carolina Acevedo, Ana María Garcés Villa, and Mariana Pelaes López introduces sketchbooks as tools for fostering critical literacy in rural Colombian classrooms, addressing an overlooked skills gap.

Looking Ahead

These findings broaden the field and raise urgent questions for the future of EFL education. The growing presence of AI compels us to rethink instructional design, teacher training for responsible technology use, and the balance between human guidance and digital possibilities. Persistent challenges—policy-practice misalignment, inequitable working conditions, and lack of inclusive strategies—demand systemic coherence. Research on contextualized materials and critical approaches reminds us of the importance of connecting language teaching with students' identities and realities.

Issue 31 reaffirms that English language teaching is a field in constant transformation, where technological innovation, equity demands, and context-sensitive strategies converge. We invite readers to explore these approaches, test them in their classrooms, and share results with us (gist@unica.edu.co) —transforming passive reading into collaborative inquiry.

As always, we thank our authors and reviewers for trusting GiST and supporting UNICA's mission to transform society through education. Your contributions foster inclusive EFL classrooms worldwide and create tangible societal impact beyond publication.

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Effects of Flipped Model of Instruction on Reading Comprehension and Attitude of Iranian Non-English Majors: A Mixed-Method Study

Efectos del modelo invertido de instrucción en la comprensión lectora y la actitud de estudiantes iraníes de lenguas no inglesas: Un estudio de métodos mixtos

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Abstract

The current study examined the effect of the flipped instructional model on the reading comprehension skills and attitudes of non-English major university students. To achieve these goals, 80 freshmen who enrolled in the General English course during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023 at the Islamic Azad University of Babol were randomly selected and equally assigned to two groups: experimental and control. The former received flipped instruction, whereas the latter attended the regular face-to-face class. At the end of the study, an independent-samples t-test was conducted, and the results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test. Additionally, the students' attitudes were measured using a validated self-report questionnaire, and frequency analyses indicated that participants had a positive view of the pedagogical intervention.

Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was used to gather qualitative data. The thematic analysis revealed that flipped teaching enhanced reading comprehension skills and attitudes through advocating personalized and collaborative learning, and student engagement. These findings underscore the potential of the flipped instruction model to enrich EFL academic contexts and empower struggling learners, positioning it as a viable and impactful instructional strategy.

Keywords: Academic EFL context, attitude, English as a foreign language, English language teaching, flipped model of instruction, higher education, reading comprehension, struggling readers

Resumen

El presente estudio mostró el efecto del modelo invertido de instrucción en las habilidades de comprensión lectora de estudiantes universitarios, cuyo programa no era el de inglés, y sus actitudes hacia dicho modelo. Para lograr estos objetivos, 80 estudiantes de primer año, que se inscribieron en el curso de inglés general durante el segundo semestre del año académico 2022-2023 en la Universidad Islámica Azad de Babol, fueron seleccionados al azar y asignados equitativamente en dos grupos: experimental y de control. Los primeros recibieron el modelo de instrucción invertida, mientras que los segundos asistieron a la clase presencial regular. Al final del estudio, se realizó una prueba t para muestras independientes y los resultados indicaron que el grupo experimental superó al grupo de control en la prueba posterior. Además, la actitud de los estudiantes se midió con un cuestionario validado de autoinforme y los análisis de frecuencia indicaron la visión positiva de los participantes hacia la intervención pedagógica. Además, se utilizó una entrevista semiestructurada para recopilar datos cualitativos. El análisis temático reveló que la enseñanza invertida mejoró las actitudes, las habilidades de comprensión lectora al promover el aprendizaje personalizado y colaborativo y la participación de los estudiantes. Estos hallazgos resaltan el potencial del modelo de instrucción invertida para enriquecer los contextos académicos de inglés como lengua extranjera y empoderar a los estudiantes con dificultades, posicionándolo como una estrategia de instrucción viable e impactante.

Palabras clave: Contexto académico del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), actitud, inglés como lengua extranjera, enseñanza del inglés, modelo invertido de instrucción, educación superior, comprensión lectora, lectores con dificultades.

Resumo

O presente estudo examinou o efeito do modelo de ensino invertido nas habilidades de compreensão leitora de estudantes universitários cujos programas acadêmicos não eram relacionados ao inglês, bem como suas atitudes em relação a esse modelo. Para alcançar esses objetivos, 80 estudantes do primeiro ano, matriculados no curso de inglês geral durante o segundo semestre do ano acadêmico de 2022-2023 na Universidade Islâmica Azad de Babol, foram selecionados aleatoriamente e distribuídos de forma equilibrada em dois grupos: experimental e controle. O grupo experimental recebeu o modelo de ensino invertido, enquanto o grupo de controle participou das aulas presenciais tradicionais. Ao final do estudo, realizou-se um teste t para amostras independentes, e os resultados indicaram que o grupo experimental obteve desempenho superior ao grupo de controle no pós-teste. Além disso, a atitude dos estudantes foi medida por meio de um questionário validado de autorrelato, cujas análises de frequência revelaram percepções positivas em relação à intervenção pedagógica. Também foi utilizada uma entrevista semiestruturada para coletar dados qualitativos. A análise temática mostrou que o ensino invertido aprimorou as atitudes e as habilidades de compreensão leitora ao promover aprendizagem personalizada e colaborativa, além de maior engajamento estudantil. Esses achados destacam o potencial do modelo de ensino invertido para enriquecer contextos acadêmicos de inglês como língua estrangeira e apoiar estudantes com dificuldades, consolidando-o como uma estratégia instrucional viável e impactante.

Palavras-chave: Atitude, contexto acadêmico de EFL, modelo de sala de aula invertida, compreensão de leitura, leitores com dificuldades, inglês como língua estrangeira, ensino de inglês, ensino superior. contexto acadêmico de inglês como língua estrangeira, modelo de ensino invertido, compreensão leitora, leitores com dificuldades, inglês como língua estrangeira, aprendizagem de inglês.

Introduction

Advanced technologies have led to drastic changes in all aspects of life in the 21st century (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021; El-Sway, 2018), and education is no exception.

In Iran, English is studied as a foreign language (FL). However, to access the latest scientific advancements and scholarly journals across several fields, a strong level of reading comprehension is essential. Unfortunately, many university students find it challenging and stressful to cope with the academic reading tasks assigned to them (Bahrami & Rahimy, 2020; Bahrami & Rahimy, 2022; Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Khabir et al., 2022; Sin & Siahpoosh, 2020).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an inseparable component of the Flipped Model of Instruction (FMI) due to its frequent use of pre-recorded audio/video educational clips or files as supplementary teaching materials shared online before class time (Bergmann & Sams, 2014; Enfield, 2013; Lee & Wallace, 2018).

In sum, the FMI has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach to encourage more student-centered learning experiences. Thus, the following probing questions were proposed in the current study to investigate the FMI further and contribute to the growing body of research on this innovative pedagogical model:

> Q1: How does using the FMI affect the reading comprehension skills of Iranian non-English majors?
>
> Q2: How do Iranian non-English majors perceive the flipped model of instruction?

Literature Review

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive process that includes decoding, interpreting, and understanding written texts (Bernhardt, 2011; Enciso, 2015; Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

The next key term is attitude, which generally refers to an inclination or predisposition. In educational contexts, this construct encompasses motivation, interest, self-efficacy, and value perception (Bakkaloğlu & Pilten, 2023). According to Anggriawan et al. (2023), a positive attitude has an important role in language learning because it "affects someone's decisions, behaviors, and attempts when facing challenges" (p. 24).

In EFL contexts, there are two major trends in probing the effectiveness of the FMI: its effects on a specific language skill or subskill, and learners' satisfaction or attitude towards it (Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022). Previous studies have positively reported the effects of the FMI in improving different areas of language learning, such as reading comprehension (Abaeian & Samadi, 2016; Abbasian & Azeez, 2021; Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Khabir et al., 2022; Sin & Siahpoosh, 2020), inferential skills (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021), writing drafts and organizing ideas (Adas & Bakir, 2013; Alghasab, 2020; Elfatah & Ahmed, 2016), listening comprehension (Ahmad, 2016; El-Sway, 2018; Namaziandost et al., 2019), speaking performance (Abdullah et al., 2019), pronunciation (Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022), grammatical accuracy (Mahmudi, 2020), communicative competence (Wang & Liu, 2018); pragmatic competence (Wafa & Altakhaineh, 2019), metacognitive development (Shi & Huang, 2018), student performance, learning, and engagement (Fahim et al., 2020), linguistic self-confidence (Leis, 2016), and vocabulary learning (Alnuhayt, 2018). However, there are still controversies in research findings when the FMI is used in contexts with marked cultural differences (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Bargi, 2017; Leis, 2016), different subject matters (Du, 2018), and different levels of language proficiency and educational background (Alnuhayt, 2018; Namaziandost et al., 2020; Nicholes, 2020). Generally, intermediate EFL learners were reported to benefit more overall in comprehension from the FMI than upper-intermediate learners (Abaeian & Samadi, 2016; Abbasian & Azeez, 2021), whereas some studies reported no such difference (Nicholes, 2020; Sin & Siahpoosh, 2020). Asaka et al. (2018) concluded that the FMI cannot be conclusively a necessarily effective means for improving EFL learner's overall comprehension skills. Hung (2015), on the contrary, asserted that the FMI improves EFL students' academic performance in general. Table 1 summarizes the previous studies.

Table 1. Summary of the previous studies

Skill/Attitude Studies	Reported Findings	Authors
Reading comprehesion	Improvement	Abaeian & Samadi (2016); Abbasian & Azeez (2021); Karimi & Hamzavi (2017); Khabir et al. (2022); Sin & Siahpoosh (2020)
Inferrential skill	Improvement	Samiei & Ebadi (2021)
Writing drafts and organizing ideas	Improvement	Adas & Bakir (2013); Alghasab (2020); Elfatah & Ahmed (2016)
Listening comprehension	Improvements	Ahmad (2016); El-Sway (2018); Namaziandost et al. (2019)
Speaking performance	Improvement	Abdullah et al. (2019)
Pronunciation	Improvement	Bin-Hady & Hazaea (2022)
Grammatical accuracy	Improvement	Mahmudi (2020)
Communicative competence	Improvement	Wang & Liu (2018)
Pragmatic competence	Improvement	Wafa & Altakhaineh (2019)
Metacognitive skills	development	Shi & Huang (2018)
Student performance, learning, and engagement	Improvement	Fahim et al. (2020)
Linguistic self-confidence	Improvement	Leis (2016)
Vocabulary learning	Improvement	Alnuhayt (2018)
Limitation/ controversy Sources	Cultural differences	Al-Ghamdi & Al-Bargi (2017); Leis (2016)
	subject matter differences	Du (2018)
	Proficiency levels / educational background differences	Alnuhayt (2018); Namaziandost et al. (2020); Nicholes (2020)
Level comparison	Intermediate > Upper-intermediate in comprehension	Abaeian & Samadi (2016); Abbasian & Azeez (2021)
	No clear differences	Nicholes (2020); Sin & Siahpoosh (2020)
General conclusions	FMI not necessarily conclusive	Asaka, et al. (2018)
	FMI improves overall academic performance	Hung (2015)

In sum, as Abdelshaheed, (2017) mentions, ''the number of the systematic studies investigating the effectiveness [of the FMI] as higher education teaching model is limited and small" (p. 98), so great caution must be considered when implementing FMI. The current study builds on previous research by integrating the FMI into a reading course for basic level readers.

Most of the previous Iranian researchers who focused on EFL learners at public schools or private English institutes were limited to studying male (Hashemifardnia et al., 2018) and female students (Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Sin, & Siahpoosh, 2020) separately, due to the educational policy of separate classes for students prior to the higher education level. Furthermore, studies with Iranian university students were less frequent or limited to content classes, so this study aimed to fill some gaps and target non-English majors, with the hope of shedding light on gray areas of the FMI, particularly in an academic EFL context.

Method

Participants

Eighty students were selected from the whole population of non-English major first-year students who had enrolled for the compulsory General English course. The study took place at the Islamic Azad University of Babol during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

The selected party included undergraduate non-English majors from both genders whose age ranged from 18 to 25.

Materials

The reading materials were selected from the second edition of Reading for General English (Pourgive et al., 2010).

Instruments

A reliable and validated pre-and post-test, questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview were used to collect the data. The test included 20 multiple-choice items. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the test was 0.82, indicating good internal consistency and reliability.

In addition, to determine the participants' perceptions toward using the FMI, a four-point Likert-scale, closed-ended questionnaire was given to the experimental group to self-report at the end of the pedagogical intervention. The 13-item questionnaire was previously used by AL-Ghamdi and Al-Bargi (2017); the researcher modified it to meet their requirements to probe the role of the pedagogical intervention in students' reading comprehension and engagement in class activities. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha stability coefficient of the questionnaire was .763, which indicated acceptable amount of reliability and stability.

Procedure

The study utilized a quasi-experimental, explanatory mixed-method design incorporating pre-and post-tests with a control group (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design ensured methodological rigor by combining both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis, and allowing a profound investigation of the complex relationships between the variables under investigation, as well as the mechanisms through which flipped teaching may influence the students' reading comprehension skills and attitudes.

Before the pedagogical intervention, both groups were pre-tested through a reading comprehension test to set the baseline of comparison.

First, they were introduced to the FMI through teacher explanations. An online group was created on IGAP, an Iranian messaging and communication platform that allows the creation of private groups to exchange messages, materials, and educational activities.

The flipped class consisted of two stages: the pre-class stage, including online pre-reading tasks, and the in-class stage, consisting of while-reading and post-reading activities. The pre-class stage began two days before the class. On the first day, a picture was shared as a prompt to introduce the topic and start discussions. This was done to encourage brainstorming and activate their prior knowledge. Finally, the students were told to choose the best comments shared on the IGAP group.

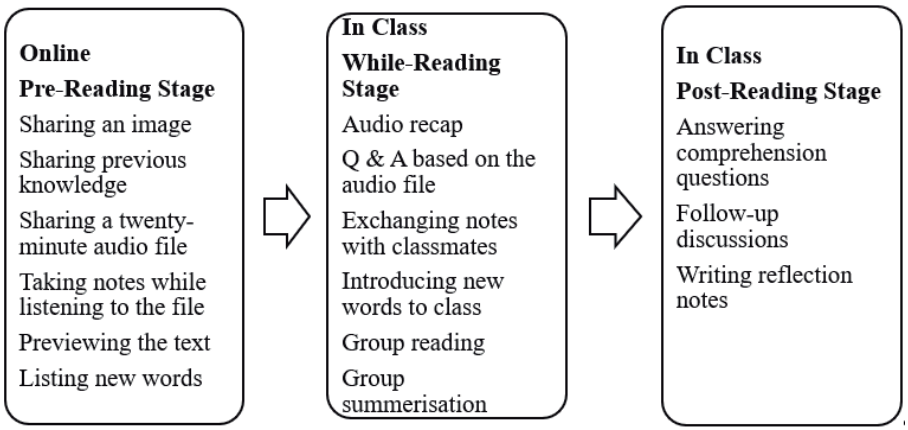
On the second day of flipping, a twenty-minute, topic-related audio clip was shared with the group. It was taken from English podcasts. The instructor provided the necessary modifications regarding the length of the clips and added further explanations. The students were asked to take notes while listening to the audio files and bring their notes, questions and comments to class for further discussions. They were also told to pre-view the text and prepare a list of new words with short English definitions, synonym or antonyms.

Each class initiated with a brief recap of the pre-class materials, highlighting the key points and concepts.

For the while-reading stage, the class was divided into small groups, and each was assigned to read, highlight key words, and summarize one paragraph of the passage. Then, the groups were told to exchange their summaries and provide feedback on each other's work, offering constructive criticism or suggestions for further improvement.

In the post-reading stage, the students answered the comprehension questions, followed by further discussion and debate. Finally, they were asked to write a short reflection note on the passage. The procedure is illustrated as follows:

Figure 1. The three stages of the flipped class



On the contrary, no online group was made for the control class, and the students were not given any tasks to become familiar with the topics before attending the class. In other words, the same tasks, materials, and steps were used except for the preparatory online component to ensure consistency in the tasks and assessments necessary for a fair comparison.

Finally, the post-test was administered to both groups. Afterwards, the questionnaire was distributed, and the experimental group was asked to share their opinions about the flipped class.

Results

Quantitative Analyses

Regarding the first research question, '' How does using the FMI affect the reading comprehension skills of Iranian non-English majors?", the pre-test descriptive statistics were evaluated to see the potential differences in the learners' reading comprehension

skills between the experimental and control groups before the pedagogical intervention. Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of the pre-test for the experimental (flipped) and the control (non-flipped) classes.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the pre-test

	Class	N	Mean	Std Deviation
score	exp	40	6.53	1.01
	con	40	6.53	1.21

Table 2 indicates that the mean scores of both groups for the pre-test were the same, and the standard deviations were close.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Berger & Zhou, 2014) test was conducted to determine if the data followed a normal distribution (Table 3).

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality of data

	class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
scorepost	f	.210	40	.103
	n	.247	40	.103

As Table 3 shows, df (78) = 0.103, $p < .05$; the p-value is greater than .05, which indicates that the data was normally distributed; therefore, an independent sample t-test can be run to investigate the effects of the pedagogical intervention. Table 4 indicates the descriptive statistics of the post-test.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the post-test

	class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
scorepost	f	40	18.40	.955	.151
	n	40	12.05	.904	.143

For the post-test, the mean and standard deviation scores of the experimental group equal 18.40 and .955; the control group values are 12.05 and .904, respectively. Table 5 shows the next step is running an independent sample t-test to find out whether the mean difference between the two groups is statistically significant.

Table 5. Independent sample t-test results

F		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
scores	Equal variances assumed	1.508	.223	30.52	78	.000	6.35	.20	5.93	6.76
	Equal variances not assumed			30.52	77.76	.000	6.35	.20	5.93	6.76

A two-tailed independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the post-test reading comprehension mean scores of the flipped (M= 18.40, SD=9.55) and non-flipped (M= 12.05, SD=.904) classes. The results indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups, t (78) =30.52, p< .05, with the experimental group scoring significantly higher than those in the control group. The effect size was moderate (Cohen's d=.078).

Considering the second research question, ''How do Iranian Non-English majors perceive the flipped model of instruction? '', frequency analyses were used to analyze the questionnaire data. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of EFL students' attitudes towards the FMI.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for EFL students' attitude on the FMI

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I participate and engage myself more in learning in the flipped classroom.	22	3	4	3.68	.477
2. The flipped classroom helps me to effectively cooperate with my classmates.	22	3	4	3.91	.294
3. The flipped classroom enables me to manage my own learning activities.	22	3	4	3.55	.510
4. The flipped classroom facilitates more communication between me and my teacher and classmates.	22	3	4	3.68	.477
5. I become an active learner in the flipped classroom.	22	3	4	3.68	.477
6. I think the time and effort I spend in the flipped classroom is worthwhile.	22	3	4	3.55	.510
7. The flipped classroom facilitates my personalized learning.	22	3	4	3.68	.477
8. The flipped classroom provides me with more opportunities to communicate in English.	22	3	4	3.73	.456
9. The flipped classroom provides me with more opportunities to practice and improve my reading skill.	22	3	4	3.95	.213
10. The flipped classroom provides me with more opportunities to deepen my understanding of the text.	22	3	4	3.45	.510
11. I feel more motivated to participate in class after listening to the audio files.	22	3	4	3.45	.510
12. I am not satisfied with this flipped learning experience.	22	4	4	4.00	.000
13. The flipped classroom should be used more often in teaching the English language.	22	3	4	3.50	.512
14. I prefer to listen to the teacher in class.	22	3	4	3.50	.512
Valid N (list wise)	22				

Table 6 illustrates the means of the questionnaire's directional items ranged from 3.40 to 4.00, revealing a positive view towards the use of the FMI. The participants found the FMI engaging and helpful in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. Regarding the two non-directional items, all the participants expressed their satisfaction with the FMI (M=4) and the majority asserted their preference for the flipped class over the traditional one (M=3.5), which strongly supports the non-English major's positive view towards the FMI in an EFL academic context.

Qualitative Analysis

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of four students randomly chosen from each group. The interviewees were addressed as E1, E2, E3, E4 for the experimental group and C1, C2, C3, and C4 for the control one.

After gathering the qualitative data, the recordings were transcribed and translated into English. The next step was reading and re-reading them to immerse in the data and gain a holistic picture of the learners' experience and viewpoints. The interviewees referred to three common themes regarding the impact of the FMI on their reading comprehension skills and attitudes. The first one was personalized learning. E4 described the FMI effects this way:

> The FMI provided me with an opportunity to go on learning with my own speed. I could listen to the shared files several times, practice the difficult parts as much as I needed, and become familiar with the topic ahead of class, which made it easier for me to take part in class activities and follow-up discussions and debates. Compared to the traditional, teacher-centered, lecture-based classes I had in the past, the FMI was a more productive experience and turned me into a more competent and confident English reader.

Unlike the experimental group, the control group interviewees reported difficulties keeping up with the class pace, as they did not have preparatory materials to help them stay on track. They also complained about the heavy class workload that resulted in losing interest or concentration. C2 described the situation this way:

> Compared to the previous traditional lecture-based classes, I sometimes felt I was falling behind because the class pace was too fast for me to adjust. Moreover, it was challenging to keep up with all the tasks and participate in all the class activities and discussions. I frequently felt lost, and unprepared.

The second theme mentioned by the interviewees was the collaborative, student-centered nature of the FMI compared to the competitive, teacher-centered traditional ones. E3 referred to the importance of these features of the FMI:

> Traditional classes were based on teacher lectures. All you had to do was listening passively and taking notes. It was common to lose concentration and get bored in such classes. However, the collaborative activities of the flipped class made the learning more effective and enjoyable.

Interestingly, the control group interviewees also favored the collaborative, student-centered nature of their classes but faced challenges due to the lack of any preparatory phase. C4 explained the situation as follows:

> I liked the idea of collaborative activities, but I occasionally struggled to contribute to group works and take part in class discussions. It was challenging to keep up with my classmates who seemed more comfortable, particularly during the group works.

Finally, the experimental group interviewees found the FMI more engaging, and less threatening, or stressful, compared to the traditional classes. According to E3:

> The FMI made me more engaged with the reading materials. Getting prepared beforehand and then discussing and applying the concepts in class helped me to understand the texts better and stay interested.

The control group interviewees highlighted their challenges in engaging with the text due to ''the fast pace of the class' (C3 & C2) and ''heavy loads of in-class tasks" (C1 & C4).

Discussion

The FMI's positive effects may be due to its engaging and collaborative nature (Dong, 2023). Research by Alghasab and Alvarez-Ayure (2021) characterizes collaboration as '' high mutuality, including reciprocal feedback, sharing ideas, considering the proposals of others, seeking and giving help and feedback, and explaining and elaborating" (p. 3), an outcome that is at the heart of academic literacy and the key to successful instruction and learning.

Meanwhile, the FMI promotes personalized learning (Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022). As Du (2018) points out, students become '' the controllers of learning progress" (p. 9) in a flipped class. Also, it allows teachers to provide their students with customized guidance and personalized recommendations, which '' increases the productivity of the class" (Abbasian & Azeez, 2021, p. 102).

In addition, it enables teachers to make more efficient use of class time. Since learning initiates outside class, there is enough time to clarify any misunderstandings or answer questions arising while reviewing the online resources. This allows teachers

to focus on more challenging concepts and have enough time for practical activities that reinforce and deepen learning. The FMI teaches us that students learn better independently and cooperatively.

Even though the existing literature portrays promising horizons for the FMI, teachers should bear in mind that inserting technology into traditional classes per se does not guarantee positive results. Consequently, great care should be taken regarding the quality of materials provided to students before class and the guidance, supervision, and support provided by the instructor during class (Dong, 2023). In other words, the FMI is not only about including technology but also about the course objectives and requirements. (Hamamah & Delijar, 2020).

Overall, research findings suggest that educators in EFL contexts should consider incorporating the FMI as an effective way to help the learners. However, further research is required to explore the generalizability of the results of these findings across different populations and settings, as well as to investigate the long-term effects of the FMI on student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The current study was conducted to further investigate the effects of the FMI in boosting non-English major students' reading comprehension skills and attitude in an EFL academic context.

Considering the demographic features of the participants, this study extended the scope of previous studies, which primarily focused either on native speakers and content classes in L1 or on English majors in L2 or FL educational contexts. Additionally, including participants from both genders ensured that the findings were representative of a more diverse, naturalistic student population and could be generalized to a broader audience across various educational settings.

Furthermore, the findings led to a more holistic view on the impacts of FMI on learning. While the investigation of its effects on reading comprehension enhancement indicated its positive impact on the cognitive aspect of learning, the examination of students' attitudes highlighted its important role in strengthening the affective dimension.

Unlike previous studies using video clips, the current study used audio files as the flip tool to preview the content of the passage before class. The idea was to provide the students with accessible learning material that could be listened to on-the-go. Since the audios contained no visual clues, students had to rely on their ears to interpret what they heard. Additionally, the recorded material improved their pronunciation,

listening, and speaking skills, as well. This motivated them to read the texts aloud in class and participate in follow-up discussions and debates. Finally, engaging with the material through different modalities improved their overall comprehension skills and retention of the content.

The results also revealed that the FMI could significantly improve the reading comprehension test scores of non-English majors, regardless of gender. This finding is consistent with previous research findings reporting benefits on reading comprehension (Abaeian & Samadi, 2016; Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Khabir et al., 2022; Samiei & Ebadi, 2021) as well as other communicative skills (Elfatah & Ahmed, 2016; El-Sway 2018; Mahmoudi, 2020; Namaziandost, et al., 2019). Thus, the FMI has the potential to enhance language-learning skills across diverse educational contexts.

Furthermore, based on the Likert-scale questionnaire data, it was concluded that the respondents held a positive view of the FMI. This is also in line with the previous survey studies implemented either self-report questionnaires (Abdullah et al., 2019; AL-Ghamdi & Al-Bargi, 2017; Asaka, et al., 2018; Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022; Hamamah & Delijar, 2020; Karimi & Hamzavi, 2017; Mehring, 2017; Mujtaba Asad et al., 2022; Namazidost et al., 2020), or semi-structured interviews (Fahim et al., 2020; Samiei & Ebadi, 2021). Thus, it should be well received by pedagogical policy makers, syllabus designers, material developers, and educators, and inserted into the educational programs to satisfy the needs and interests of Generation Z, who has grown up with digital technologies

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Effects of data driven learning approach on EFL learners' speaking engagement

Efectos del enfoque de aprendizaje basado en datos en la participación oral de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine students' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement in learning to speak through a data-driven learning approach. The participants in this study were 15 undergraduate EFL students at Mekdela Amba University in Ethiopia. In the intervention, which lasted for six weeks, the students were instructed to speak via a data-driven learning approach. The data were collected through self-report surveys and reflective journals. The findings obtained from the self-report survey on the three dimensions of engagement showed that the behavioural engagement score (t (14) = 8.454, p = 0.000, MD = 1.00), the cognitive engagement score (t (14) = 8.508, p = 0.000, MD = 1.296), and the emotional engagement score (t (14) = 13.759, p = 0.000, MD = 1.593) were found to be greater than the hypothesized mean score, and in all cases the difference were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, the reflective journal findings showed that students engaged positively across the three dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive. Finally, in light of the results, it was recommended that a data-driven learning approach should be included in EFL speaking instruction to augment learners' speaking engagement.

Keywords: data-driven learning, speaking skills, behavioural engagements, emotional engagements, cognitive engagements

Introduction

Learning demands active involvement from students, and action is the defining characteristic of engagement (Mercer, 2019). Thus, a data-driven learning approach offers learners an opportunity to enhance their engagement in language learning. By providing authentic language data, DDL encourages learners to actively explore language data, making the learning process more engaging. In the context of language instruction, engagement refers to the amount and type of involvement learners have in a language-learning task or activity. Active learners participate more in various tasks, practice learning outside of the classroom, and spend more time on tasks both inside and outside of the classroom. According to Dixson (2015, p. 2), "Students' engagement is the extent to which students are actively engaged by thinking, talking, and interacting with the course's content, the other students in the course, and the instructor".

Dimensions of engagement

Fredricks et al. (2004) proposed a three-dimensional model of engagement: behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Engagement involves these dimensions to actively involve students in the teaching and learning process. Behavioural engagement refers to the learners' actual participation and on-task behaviour (Zare et al., 2024). It is also related to the quantity and quality of active participation. Cognitive engagement, on the other hand, refers to the mental activity students engage in while learning (Zare et al., 2024). It involves attention and mental effort in completing a task (Reeve, 2012). Emotional engagement concerns the affective emotions/attitudes towards the task at hand (Zare et al., 2024). Positive emotions (excitement, enjoyment) indicate engagement, while negative emotions (boredom, anxiety, frustration) suggest disengagement (Mercer, 2019).

Data-driven learning (DDL)

Data-driven learning (DDL) is an approach which uses a corpus for classroom practices and language learning. The term 'data-driven learning' (DDL) was first introduced by Johns (1991). According to the author, the DDL approach uses computer-generated concordance outputs to help learners explore the regularities of patterning and develop activities and exercises.

Since its advent, scholars have used different terms to describe it. For example, 'classroom concordancing' (Johns, 1991), and 'corpus-based learning' and 'corpus consultation' (Boulton, 2017). In this study, however, DDL refers to the use of authentic language data from corpora for pedagogical purposes. This pedagogical approach

exposed learners to a wide range of well-organized, targeted written and spoken texts for English language teaching. It has been used as a teaching and learning approach for English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction for learners at different proficiency levels (Mizumoto, 2023; Zare & Delavar, 2022).

Theoretical underpinnings of the DDL approach

The DDL approach has Constructivism, the Noticing Hypothesis, and Usage-Based Theories as its theoretical basis (Flowerdew, 2015). DDL aligns with constructivist principles by promoting active engagement with authentic materials (corpora) and encouraging learners to construct their L2 knowledge through personal exploration of linguistic data (Flowerdew, 2015).

The noticing hypothesis suggests that language learning is improved through noticing and awareness (Schmidt, 2001). DDL supports this by providing learners and teachers with access to a large volume of target language features, which facilitates noticing.

The usage-based theory holds that language is acquired by analyzing real language data in authentic settings to identify recurrent patterns (Tomasello, 2003). DDL supports this by exposing learners to sufficient, authentic use of the target language, and instruction grounded in corpora is based on this documented authentic usage (Dolgova & Tyler, 2019).

DDL and engagement

Research shows that DDL requires learners' cognitive engagement in tasks that demand the activation of higher-order cognitive skills (O'Sullivan, 2007). However, the connection between DDL and cognitive engagement has not been studied (O'Keeffe, 2021). Regarding emotional engagement, previous research shows that incorporating a DDL approach can foster language learners' positive emotions (Zare et al., 2022). Social engagement involves negotiating and collaborating with peers and the teacher. Research indicates that DDL leads learners to higher levels of social engagement during form-focused episodes (O'Keeffe, 2021).

In language instruction, engagement is an important concern because without students' active involvement in the teaching-learning process, educational objectives cannot be achieved (Birhan & Nurie, 2024). Although there seems to be a strong connection between DDL and engagement, empirical studies in this area are scarce. In particular, no empirical study has been conducted on learners' speaking engagement in the data-driven learning approach. Accordingly, this study examined the effects of data-driven learning on EFL learners' engagement in speaking. To attain this objective, the study formulated the following research question:

Does the DDL approach affect undergraduate EFL learners' engagement in academic speaking?

Research methodology

Research setting and participants

The researchers used convenience sampling to recruit participants. Accordingly, fourth-year undergraduate EFL learners of Mekdela Amba University who were registered for the course 'Seminar on Selected Topics' in the academic year 2023 were selected. A total of 15 participants were included in the study. The sample consisted of 11 males and 4 females. The participants were from diverse L1 backgrounds. They had exposure to English only through formal education, and they used English to study undergraduate courses. The intact group was used directly in the research because the study employed a quasi-experimental design that relies on intact-group randomization (Creswell, 2012).

Data collection instruments

Self-report survey

In this study, the level of the participants' engagement during instruction of academic speaking using the DDL approach was measured using a self-report survey. The self-report survey consisted of 27 items: 8 focused on behavioural engagement, 11 on emotional engagement, and 8 on cognitive engagement. These items were prepared using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 to 1 (5=always; 4=usually; 3=sometimes; 2=rarely; 1=never). Participants were asked to complete the survey to examine their levels of engagement, and they were directed to select the responses that best described them.

The development of this instrument passed through the following procedures. First, the items were adapted from Fredricks et al. (2004) into three sub-constructs (behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement). Second, the set of engagement self-report survey items was given to Psychology scholars to indicate which items belonged to the appropriate sub-construct. Finally, based on the scholars' judgments, the self-report survey questionnaire was developed under three sub-constructs. Based on the scholars' judgments, the self-report survey questionnaire was developed under three sub-constructs and checked for reliability. The Cronbach's alpha test of reliability ($\alpha = .819$) indicates that the self-report survey questionnaire was reliable.

Students' reflective journals

The reflective journals were used to collect qualitative data about students' feelings, thoughts, and reflections on DDL instruction. The students' reflective journals were collected throughout the intervention to gain data on students' reactions while working on the corpus-based DDL tasks. Therefore, students were provided with guidance for each engagement dimension to help them write their reflections.

Data analysis methods

One-sample t-tests was used to analyze the self-report survey data. This statistical technique compares the sample's observed mean score to the population mean to analyze data from a single sample group. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to conduct descriptive and inferential statistical analyses in the study. Furthermore, in this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data gathered from student reflective journals. This analysis involved identifying and reporting significant themes from the qualitative data. The steps followed in the thematic analysis include: repeatedly reading the students' reflective journals to make sense of the data, selecting significant quotes, developing themes, and finally analyzing and narrating the data.

Corpus material design

This study intended to assess the learners' engagement levels in DDL-based instruction. In the intervention, a specific speaking genre had to be selected to limit the study's scope; as a result, the academic oral presentation genre was chosen. Thus, target language patterns frequently used across different sections of an oral presentation were emphasized in the DDL-based intervention.

The materials preparation followed the following procedure. The first step was selecting the corpus. To select the corpus, the researcher considered the target learners' problem areas and the specific features that the researcher wanted to teach (academic oral presentation). As a result, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) was selected for the study. This corpus contains 152 speech events, including examples of virtually every kind that occur on a university campus. The speakers include instructors and students of every level, both native and non-native speakers. The corpus consists of 88% native speakers and 12% non-native speakers. This wide variety of speeches was recorded and transcribed. It is a corpus composed entirely of academic spoken English and therefore provides the best possible snapshot of the language being used in a university context.

Once the corpus was selected, the next step was to analyze it to identify frequent target-language features, focusing on those specific to the learning goals. As a result, formulaic sequences used across different rhetorical moves in academic oral presentations were identified. Accordingly, formulaic expressions for greeting audiences, introducing oneself, introducing the topic, illustrating points, sequencing ideas, expressing opinions, signalling conclusions, summarizing, and thanking, which are commonly used in different sections of an academic oral presentation, were selected. The formulaic expressions were taken from the MICASE based on the lower cut-off limit for an expression to be considered frequent, which is 10 occurrences/ million words, according to the guidelines proposed by Bardovi-Harlig et al. (2015) and Biber et al. (1999).

The selection of formulaic sequences involved the following procedures. First, the MICASE corpus is loaded into the AntConc software. Next, common expressions are generated and identified based on the lower cut-off limit mentioned above. Then, the formulaic sequences are extracted and analyzed in their contexts using concordance lines. Finally, the sequences are categorized based on their pragmatic functions (greeting, introducing, sequencing ideas, etc), and authentic examples that were illustrative and engaging for learners were taken. These language patterns and authentic examples were presented as concordance lines and excerpts.

Based on the language patterns and authentic examples identified from the corpus, activities and tasks were developed. Lessons that provided learners with input and production activities were designed. Therefore, lessons that included consciousness-raising or focused-noticing activities, as well as production activities, were designed. The consciousness-raising activities were designed to help learners notice and understand target language features and to develop explicit knowledge of these features. Consciousness-raising activities are means of making features of language salient, facilitating learners' noticing of the target language model. The production activities, on the other hand, were designed to help learners practice and use target-language features in actual communication.

Intervention

The DDL intervention consisted of two main types of activities: Consciousness-Raising (CR) activities and Production activities, designed to enhance speaking skills using corpus data, specifically focusing on formulaic expressions in oral presentations.

Consciousness-raising activities were based on corpus input, using concordance evidence and model oral presentation extracts (e.g., from MICASE). These activities help learners become aware of target formulaic expressions in authentic language use. This provided learners with explicit knowledge of language features. Learners worked in groups to identify and analyze target sequences and notice language features (e.g., how speakers use expressions at different stages of a presentation). Focused activities

involved analyzing excerpts with highlighted and bolded target expressions. Frequent exposure to authentic structures, as noted by Gabrielatos (2005), led to awareness of language patterns.

Production activities focused on repeated practice to help learners transform their new explicit (declarative) knowledge into usable (procedural) knowledge. In this section, speaking activities were designed to help learners use the target formulaic expressions identified from the corpus (e.g., greeting the audience and announcing topics). This stage took longer. Learners first consciously retrieved the speech production sequences (a rehearsal stage). Through repeated practice and exposure, they gradually developed the ability to retrieve and produce them automatically, moving toward procedural knowledge and possibly implicit knowledge. Learners prepared their final oral presentations using the newly discovered formulaic sequences. This act of being "pushed" to use the language aligns with Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which posits that productive use facilitates deeper language processing.

Results and discussions

Students' engagement level in learning academic speaking via the DDL approach

Table 1. One-samplet-test results of behavioural engagement

	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3		
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Behavioural engagement	8.454	14	.000	1.00	.747	1.252

A one-sample t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in participants' level of behavioural engagement. As indicated in Table 1 (M= 4.00; S.D =.473), the mean score after the intervention was above the expected mean value (M=3.00). The test result (t (14) =8.454, $p < 0.05$), shows that the participants' level of behavioural engagement was significantly higher than the expected level or the population mean score (3.00). Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' behavioural engagement in the DDL instruction was significantly higher.

Table 2. One-sample t-test results of cognitive engagement

	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Cognitive engagement	8.508	14	.000	1.296	.971	1.621

As shown in Table 2, the cognitive engagement score (t(14) = 8.508, p = 0.000, MD = 1.296) was greater than the hypothesized mean, and the difference was statistically significant (p < 0.05). Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' cognitive engagement level in learning academic speaking through the DDL approach was higher.

Table 3. One-sample t-test results of emotional engagement

	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3	Test Value = 3
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Emotional engagement	13.759	14	.000	1.593	1.347	1.84

A one-sample t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in participants' emotional engagement. As indicated in Table 3 (M = 4.593; S.D. = .463), the participants' mean score was above the expected mean (M = 3.00). The test result (t(14) = 13.759, p < 0.05) indicates that the participants' level of emotional engagement was significantly higher than the expected level or the population mean. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' emotional engagement in the DDL-based instruction was significantly greater than the expected mean score.

To triangulate the results from a self-report survey, data were collected through reflective journals. The participants were given guided items focused on behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Thus, participants wrote their reflections about learning speaking skills, particularly academic oral presentation skills, through the DDL approach. Accordingly, the data obtained from the students' reflective journals were analyzed under the three dimensions of engagement.

The first section of the reflective journal focused on students' behavioural engagement in learning academic speaking through the DDL intervention. Participants in their reflective journals stated that they were interested and excited to learn to speak through the DDL intervention. For example, Participant 11 stated his behavioural engagement in learning to speak through the DDL intervention as follows:

"I am interested in the new method of teaching. I found it beneficial for my academic speaking. Thus, I attend classes properly during the speaking instruction which is given via DDL. Moreover, I actively engaged in pair and group discussions to complete classroom tasks. When the teacher gave us home assignments and class work, I tried to complete and submit them properly. The concordance-based activities made me practice the target language features so that I could use them for later oral production. I was actively involved in asking and answering questions for a better understanding of the DDL lesson."

The second group of items in the reflective journal concerns the students' emotional engagement in learning to speak through the DDL intervention. Based on the reflective journal, participants stated that they enjoyed the corpus-based DDL instruction and were happy to learn to speak using corpus tools such as concordance lines. The following students' reflective journals show how their emotions were fully engaged in developing their speaking skills during DDL-based instruction. Student 3 reflected his feelings about the DDL instruction as follows:

"I'm very happy to study English with the corpus-based DDL approach because with this approach, I can learn linguistic features important for my academic oral presentations. So, I enjoyed learning formulaic sequences for oral presentations through concordance-based activities. I'm very interested in learning the target language features through DDL material because the intervention material makes me identify important formulaic sequences for my academic oral presentations."

Furthermore, student 7, on his part, reflected the following idea:-

"I'm so happy to learn academic oral presentation skills via concordance-based activities and authentic language features. This new method of teaching provided me with important language features for my academic oral presentations, so I found the intervention attractive.

In addition, learning academic speaking skills becomes more fun. However, I faced difficulties during the DDL intervention. The cut-off sentences in the concordance

lines were difficult to understand, but later the teacher-led instruction helped my understanding, and I felt happy to get a new experience in developing academic speaking skills."

The remaining items in the reflective journals focus on students' cognitive engagement in learning academic speaking through the DDL intervention. The results show that the participants were cognitively engaged in the DDL-based intervention. The participants demonstrated their willingness to learn the material by noticing and identifying target formulaic sequences presented in the concordance lines and example extracts. Based on the reflective journal, most students noted that their knowledge of formulaic sequences increased after the DDL intervention. Through data-driven learning, they studied a considerable number of formulaic sequences, which helped their academic speaking skills.

Discussion

The research question was intended to assess learners' engagement during instruction in speaking using the DDL approach. A 27-item self-report questionnaire was administered to respondents to assess their level of language learning engagement. Accordingly, the questionnaire data were analyzed using a one-sample t-test. The findings of the analysis showed that the behavioural engagement score ($t(14) = 8.454$, $p = 0.000$, MD = 1.00), the cognitive engagement score ($t(14) = 8.508$, $p = 0.000$, MD = 1.296), and the emotional engagement score ($t(14) = 13.759$, $p = 0.000$, MD = 1.593) were found to be greater than the hypothesized mean score, and in all cases, the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the participants' engagement level in the three dimensions of learning academic speaking through the DDL approach was highly favourable.

Furthermore, the participants' reflective journals showed they were interested in learning to speak through the DDL intervention. They enjoyed the corpus-based DDL intervention, as this new approach provided them with wider exposure to important language features, such as formulaic sequences, which were vital to the development of their speaking skills. Besides, the participants noted that they remained engaged throughout the DDL intervention by noticing target-language features in the corpus data, completing concordance-based activities, and delivering academic presentations. As a result, the participants perceived that their academic speaking skills had improved. In sum, the present study revealed that using the DDL approach in English language classes has the potential to increase EFL learners' engagement.

In sum, the present study showed that incorporating DDL tasks into English language classes has the potential to increase EFL learners' speaking engagement.

Experiencing such an inductive, discovery-oriented approach to doing tasks would help EFL learners remain motivated and engaged (Gilquin & Granger, 2010). This aligns with Daskalovska's (2015) study, which argues that corpus-based language tasks are sufficiently motivating and engaging, and that L2 learners discover the information autonomously. In other words, DDL requires that EFL learners become engaged in their learning by using various cognitive skills, such as comparing, classifying, reasoning, analyzing, inferring, and interpreting (Boulton & Cobb, 2017). The findings from the self-report survey and reflective journals regarding participants' engagement level were also consistent with those of Zare et al. (2022), who found that using a DDL approach promotes language learners' emotional engagement. A study by Zare et al. (2024) also confirmed that integrating DDL tasks into EFL classes boosted learners' task engagement. In the same vein, Brihan and Nurie (2024) found that corpus-based instruction improved students' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagements, and students liked the activities and actively participated in the corpus-based tasks. The students' perspective also noted a series of distinguishing DDL task features – that is, motivating, authentic, autonomy-raising, curiosity, concentration, and interesting, albeit challenging – required for task engagement.

Conclusions

In this study, an attempt was made to examine the effect of the DDL intervention on learners' speaking engagement. DDL encourages learners to actively explore authentic language data (corpora) to discover usage patterns. This inductive approach shifts the focus from teacher-centred instruction to student-centred discovery, which can significantly boost engagement as learners take ownership of their learning. Moreover, when learners actively engage with real language, they often find the learning process more meaningful and motivating. This can lead to a more positive attitude towards learning and using English for speaking.DDL helps learners move beyond declarative knowledge (knowing about the language) to procedural knowledge (knowing how to use the language). By actively analyzing and applying linguistic patterns, learners become better equipped to produce accurate and fluent spoken English. As a result, learners' speaking engagement is enhanced. In this study, participants completed a self-report questionnaire after the DDL intervention to determine whether the intervention affected learners' engagement level in speaking. It was found that learners' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement levels were encouraging. In most EFL contexts, learners fail to actively engage in speaking, and a lack of engagement has been one of the most serious problems hindering learners' development of speaking skills. As indicated in the present study, learners' engagement in speaking was good when they were involved in corpus-based activities and tasks. As corpus materials provide learners with authentic examples of language use, they make learning more relevant and meaningful, and this, in turn, can boost learners' engagement.

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Chatbot-Driven Writing Practice: A Boon or a Bust for EFL Learners?

Práctica de escritura impulsada por chatbots: ¿una bendición o una decepción para los estudiantes de EFL?

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Abstract

While previous studies focused more on the impact of purpose-built AI-powered chatbots on students' L2 writing skills, a gap exists regarding the effects of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on L2 writing skills. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the impact of widespread use of AI chatbots on L2 writing skills. A quasi-experimental design was adopted, and a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach was utilized involving 36 students (19 experimental, 17 control). Quantitative data were gathered from learners' writing tasks, while semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Over five weeks, the experimental group used four chatbots for writing tasks, while the control group received teacher-led instruction. The results showed that the experimental group did not exhibit a statistically significant change in writing skills compared to the control group. Nevertheless, students in the experimental group held positive perceptions toward chatbots. Overall, the study offers valuable insights into integrating emerging technologies into English language teaching, providing critical guidance for stakeholders and practitioners on the responsible use of these tools and the pedagogical structuring of general-purpose AI chatbots.

Keywords: General-purpose AI-powered chatbots, artificial intelligence, English language learners, perceptions toward chatbots, writing skills

Resumen

Aunque estudios previos se han centrado principalmente en el impacto de chatbots de inteligencia artificial diseñados específicamente para fines educativos en el desarrollo de las habilidades de escritura en L2, persiste una brecha en la literatura respecto a los efectos de los chatbots de IA de uso general en dichas habilidades. Este estudio busca atender esta brecha mediante el análisis del impacto que tiene el uso extendido de chatbots de propósito general en la competencia escritural en L2. Se empleó un diseño cuasiexperimental y un enfoque mixto secuencial explicativo, con la participación de 36 estudiantes (19 en el grupo experimental y 17 en el grupo de control). Los datos cuantitativos provinieron de las tareas de escritura de los estudiantes, mientras que los datos cualitativos se obtuvieron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas. A lo largo de cinco semanas, el grupo experimental utilizó cuatro chatbots para la realización de tareas de escritura, en tanto que el grupo de control recibió instrucción directa por parte del docente. Los resultados indican que el grupo experimental no presentó cambios estadísticamente significativos en sus habilidades de escritura en comparación con el grupo de control. Sin embargo, los estudiantes del grupo experimental manifestaron percepciones favorables hacia el uso de chatbots. En conjunto, el estudio ofrece aportes relevantes para la integración de tecnologías emergentes en la enseñanza del inglés, y proporciona orientaciones fundamentales para actores institucionales y profesionales sobre el uso responsable de estas herramientas y sobre las consideraciones pedagógicas necesarias para incorporar chatbots de IA de propósito general.

Palabras clave: chatbots de IA de uso general, inteligencia artificial, aprendientes de inglés, percepciones sobre los chatbots, habilidades de escritura

Resumo

Embora estudos anteriores tenham se concentrado principalmente no impacto de chatbots de inteligência artificial desenvolvidos especificamente para fins educacionais no desenvolvimento das habilidades de escrita em L2, ainda persiste uma lacuna na literatura quanto aos efeitos de chatbots de IA de uso geral nessas habilidades. Este estudo busca preencher essa lacuna por meio da análise do impacto do uso ampliado de chatbots de propósito geral na competência escrita em L2. Empregou-se um delineamento quase-experimental e uma abordagem mista sequencial explicativa, com a participação de 36 estudantes (19 no grupo experimental e 17 no grupo de controle). Os dados quantitativos foram obtidos a partir das tarefas de escrita dos estudantes, enquanto os dados qualitativos foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Ao longo de cinco semanas, o grupo experimental utilizou quatro chatbots para a realização das tarefas de escrita, ao passo que o grupo de controle recebeu instrução direta do professor. Os resultados indicam que o grupo experimental não apresentou mudanças estatisticamente significativas em suas habilidades de escrita em comparação com o grupo de controle. No entanto, os estudantes do grupo experimental manifestaram percepções favoráveis sobre o uso de chatbots. Em conjunto, o estudo oferece contribuições relevantes para a integração de tecnologias emergentes no ensino de inglês e fornece orientações fundamentais para gestores e profissionais quanto ao uso responsável dessas ferramentas e às considerações pedagógicas necessárias para incorporar chatbots de IA de propósito geral.

Palavras-chave: chatbots de IA de uso geral, inteligência artificial, aprendizes de inglês, percepções sobre chatbots, habilidades de escrita

Introduction

The use of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) tools, has helped to create a more engaging, motivating learning environment and enhanced the process of learning language skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and writing (Shadiev et al., 2023). This fact has also facilitated the widespread use of such technologies across various fields[1], including language teaching and learning (Shadiev et al., 2023). They also play an essential role in enhancing the effectiveness of language learning, such as increasing motivation and enriching learning experiences (Sumakul et al., 2021). Despite the positive impacts on language education, some studies raise concerns about the reliability and accuracy of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots and privacy issues (Alhazmi & Muftah, 2025). This also raises some uncertainties about the improvements achieved by general-purpose AI-powered chatbots. That is, some experts question whether the effectiveness relies on learner-related or contextual factors (Safar & Anggraheni, 2024). Therefore, integrating general-purpose AI-powered chatbots into education can be done responsibly and cautiously. Besides, it requires context-specific research that highlights the pedagogical implications of such utilizations. It is also important to highlight their use in more depth by focusing on the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Emerging technologies such as chatbots have now supported these four pillars of a language. These tools can be intelligent assistants and/or conversational agents that provide individualized answers to human prompts using natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning. They have recently been favored in language teaching due to their various functions for teaching and learning the four language skills. For example, a chatbot can provide instant feedback by recognizing missing points and mistakes using a large data set. Despite the widespread use of these tools in language learning, speaking and writing skills have been the most frequently studied in current research (Gayed et al., 2022). Although some studies have examined the effects of AI-powered chatbots on writing skills (Mahapatra, 2024; Barrot, 2023; Song & Song, 2023), research has tended to focus on the impact on speaking skills rather than on writing skills. Considering this, to our knowledge, few studies (Mahapatra, 2024) have analyzed the possible effects of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on the writing skills of preparatory class students learning English. To fill this gap and contribute to the related literature, we investigated the impact of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on the writing skills of preparatory class students, including their vocabulary use, text cohesion and coherence, and students' perceptions of using these tools throughout writing instruction. Therefore, the current study addressed the following research question:

1. How do general-purpose AI-powered chatbots affect the development of writing skills among English preparatory class students?

2. What are students' perceptions of the implementation of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots in writing instruction?

Literature Review

In a foreign language class, developing writing skills can be seen as both vital and challenging. However, the definition of writing and what constitutes that process are not monolithic; in other words, there may be various points regarding that concept, and the process might vary across different contexts in L2 learning, as well as including the interplay between cognitive and emotional processes (Vasylets & Marin, 2021). Considering learners' perspectives, recent research indicates that the L2 writing process can be complex, requiring the retrieval of specific vocabulary and grammar items during the planning and revising stages, which also entails cognitive exertion (Güvendir & Uzun, 2023). However, it remains a crucial skill for language learners to achieve. Considering this, the emergence of CALL has led to widespread interest in the use of technology in language classes, such as writing assistants and Web 2.0 tools. In the context of teaching writing, these tools are also frequently used because they can yield positive results. For example, Barrot (2023) shows that using digital tools can enhance the learners' writing performance. In addition, improvements in natural language processing and machine learning have led to the widespread adoption of intelligent technologies in L2 writing skills. Following that, general-purpose AI-powered tools have been integrated into EFL writing classes, and studies demonstrate that their use can improve language proficiency, including grammar and vocabulary (Sumakul et al., 2021). Besides, these tools might also provide instant, detailed feedback on students' output (Escalante et al., 2023).

In this case, the potential effects of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots are also important, as they may offer promising results in writing performance. Although they have been launched recently, several studies have examined their impact on writing skills, including guidance for learners and instant feedback (Song & Song, 2023). Other studies pointed out that general-purpose AI-powered chatbots can guide students in structuring their text and brainstorming (Mahapatra, 2024). Similarly, Harunasari (2023) used a chatbot to generate ideas and request feedback on grammar structures and suitable vocabulary items. The results showed improvement in the learners' writing performance via pre-test and post-test.

However, despite the positive effects of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on writing skills, some drawbacks might occur. For example, Yan (2023) states that utilizing these tools might raise problems regarding higher-order thinking skills. Since these tools provide an easier way to access knowledge, learners might not need to analyze and critically consider the information, leading to more superficial thinking.

Nevertheless, using general-purpose AI-powered chatbots might yield positive outcomes regarding writing instruction. Having discussed these effects, pointing out the learners' insights into the use of these tools in writing classes is necessary. Studies that analyze this aspect mostly show that students hold favorable opinions about using general-purpose AI-powered chatbots for writing instruction (Duong & Chen, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of the current study was to analyze the effects of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on students' writing performance in an English preparatory class and on their perceptions of using these tools in their writing classes. A quasi-experimental design was employed to profoundly investigate the impact of these tools on writing performance. The reason for adopting this design is its suitability for investigating cause-and-effect relationships in a natural classroom setting and its ability to compare results across groups by controlling extraneous variables through pre-and post-tests. Given the current study, adopting this design was more suitable for the participants, as they had already been assigned to a particular group by the institution and could not change their groups mid-semester. In addition, the study was more quantitative and data-oriented, and qualitative data were used to further explain it. Therefore, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was preferred to gather both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). After the intervention, the qualitative data were collected from the experimental group through semi-structured interviews.

Setting and Participants

36 students studying medicine and English language teaching were recruited for the study, and they enrolled in an English preparatory class at Ondokuz Mayıs University in Türkiye. They were divided into two groups: control and experimental. While 19 students belonged to the experimental group, 17 belonged to the control group. In the School of Foreign Languages, the students enrolling in certain faculties must first take a general language proficiency exam. If they fail to meet the university-determined minimum score, they must enroll in the institute's preparatory English program. The participants were assigned to their groups based on the results of the placement test, which were analyzed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The students were divided into groups, and in each group, the writing courses were taught by different instructors using the same materials and course syllabus. These courses were provided once a week and took half an hour.

Since the students had already been assigned to specific groups, the study groups were decided without random sampling. For qualitative data collection, 13 volunteer students from the experimental group were randomly selected after the intervention.

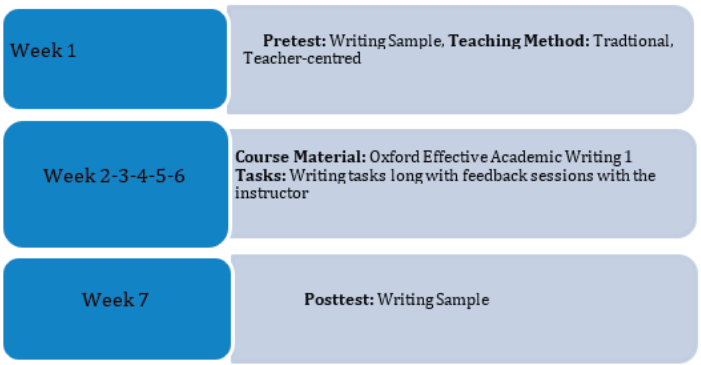
Data Collection Tools

For the quantitative data, a writing assessment scale was used to investigate learners' writing performance before and after the treatment. The instructors at Ondokuz Mayıs University developed an analytic writing assessment rubric, including five sections: relevance and adequacy of content, organization, grammar, lexical range, mechanics, and spelling. Qualitative data were collected to investigate their thoughts on using chatbots while writing text. To this end, a semi-structured interview comprising five open-ended questions was conducted. The purpose of this kind of interview was to elicit further answers that might not be expected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The interview's questions were prepared by consulting professionals in the field. They covered their thoughts on their learning performance, the challenges they faced, and the benefits they experienced throughout this process. The interview also aimed to collect data on changes in students' writing habits after using AI-powered chatbots.

Procedure

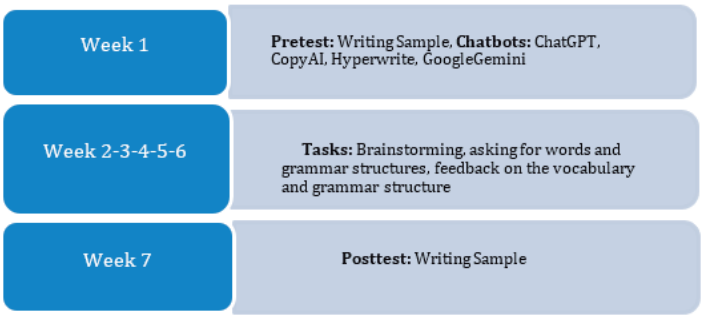
The researcher designed a writing module, and the procedure lasted seven weeks, including pre-test and post-test sessions, while the intervention sessions lasted five weeks. The module was offered to the experimental group, while the control group students received teacher-centered instruction. The procedure for both groups are displayed in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 as follows.

Fig. 1. Writing Instruction in the Control Group



As shown in Fig. 3.1, in the first week, both groups were assigned writing tasks as a pre-test. In the second week, while the control group students received writing tasks and got feedback from their instructor on their use of words and grammar structures, the experimental group students were introduced to the first chatbot (i.e., ChatGPT) as illustrated in Fig. 3.2.

Fig. 2. Writing Instruction in the Experimental Group



The selected chatbots were ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Hyperwrite, and CopyAI, and each was used differently each week. Following this brief introduction to writing prompts and technical features (e.g., subscriptions, website interfaces), they were provided with writing topics from their main coursebook. The tool was used to brainstorm and gather feedback on vocabulary and grammar. To exemplify, for the topic related to their favorite celebrity, they asked questions to the AI-powered chatbots as "I want to write about person A (the celebrity's name), can you provide an outline for my text?" or "I have used the X word, can you suggest an alternative?" "Is the word or the sentence structure suitable for this context?" Although each writing class usually lasts 30 minutes, the intervention sessions lasted 80 minutes in total because of the additional 10 minutes. In the final week, both groups received a post-test as a writing task. They were not allowed to use any digital tools, such as chatbots, dictionaries, and translators, and results were based on the students' core abilities. These writing sessions were carried out under the instructors' supervision. In total, 13 volunteer students attended the semi-structured interview.

Analysis of the Data

IBM SPSS 26 was employed to investigate the quantitative data. Kappa analysis and Weighted Cohen's Kappa were utilized to ensure the inter-rater reliability

of the test scorers. However, ChatGPT Plus was used to analyze Weighted Cohen's Kappa, ensuring the study's validity. The Shapiro-Wilk Test was used to analyze the normality of the data. The mean and standard deviation for normally distributed variables were reflected in the descriptive statistics of numerical variables. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients were used to assess the conformity of the numerical variables with the normal distribution. For the control group, the Skewness statistics were -0.157 in the pre-test and 0.083 in the post-test, while they were -0.406 (pre-test) and -0.329 (post-test) for the experimental group. Considering the Kurtosis coefficients, they were -0.300 (pre-test) and -0.285 (post-test) for the control group, and the experimental group's statistics were -1.110 (pre-test) and -0.630 (post-test). To assess statistical significance between these two groups, independent samples t-tests and paired samples t-tests were used, and $p<0.05$ was considered statistically significant. For qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was preferred, which allowed for the generation of themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The transcribed data were divided into codes and themes, and to ensure reliability and validity, another ELT professional revised the codes and the themes by comparing the first findings.

Results

Regarding the first research question about how general-purpose AI-powered chatbots affect the development of writing skills among English preparatory class students, it was found that experimental group students showed no statistically significant difference in their writing performance after using AI-powered chatbots in their writing classes. The related statistical findings including inter-rater reliability and normality analysis are presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. In addition, Tables 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 present the descriptive statistics and overall writing score for both the control and experimental groups, broken down by each category in the rubric. Table 4.1 below illustrates the inter-rater reliability of the instructors who scored the writing tasks for both the control and experimental groups. To assess scorers' agreement on the writing tasks, the Kappa test was used. The Kappa test used for the pre-test indicates that inter-rater reliability was ensured in both the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Inter-rater Reliability Results of the Pre-test–Writing Sample

Groups	Sub-Categories	Kappa Statistics	p-value
Control Group	Relevance and Adequacy of Content	0.73	0.046*
	Organization	0.81	0.011*
	Grammar	0.88	0.009*
	Lexical Range	0.78	0.029*
	Mechanics and Spelling	0.79	0.027*
Experimental Group	Relevance and Adequacy of Content	0.85	0.013*
	Organization	0.82	0.017*
	Grammar	0.76	0.035*
	Lexical Range	0.87	0.025*
	Mechanics and Spelling	0.74	0.020*

Similarly, in Table 4.2, the inter-reliability test findings show that the scores provided by the two instructors were reliable, and there is strong agreement between them.

Table 2. Inter-rater Reliability Results of the Posttest – Writing Samples

Groups	Sub-Categories	Kappa Statistics	p-value
Control Group	Relevance and Adequacy of Content	0.72	0.032*
	Organization	0.78	0.001
	Grammar	0.84	0.015*
	Lexical Range	0.90	0.001*
	Mechanics and Spelling	0.76	0.033*
Experimental Group	Relevance and Adequacy of Content	0.88	0.009*
	Organization	0.72	0.032*
	Grammar	0.71	0.023*
	Lexical Range	0.82	0.017*
	Mechanics and Spelling	0.77	0.021*

Table 3 (pre-test) and 4 (post-test) display the results of the analysis using quadratic-weighted Cohen's kappa.

Table 3. Inter-rater Reliability Results of the Pre-test Writing Results Based on Weighted Cohen's Kappa Results (Control & Experimental Groups)

Subscale	Kw (Cont)	95% CI (Cont)	N (Cont)	Kw (Exp)	95% CI (Exp)	N (Exp)
Relevance & Adequacy of Content	.481	[.143, .752]	21	.321	[-.023, .622]	19
Organization	.273	[-.032, .533]	21	.246	[-.038, .515]	19
Grammar	.357	[-.025, .635]	21	.715	[.399, .882]	19
Lexical Range	.184	[-.197, .533]	21	.647	[.341, .820]	19
Mechanics & Spelling	.512	[.167, .831]	21	.653	[.334, .811]	19

Table 4. Inter-rater Reliability Results of the Post-test Writing Results Based on Weighted Cohen's Kappa (Control & Experimental Groups)

Subscale	κw (Con)	95%CI (Cont)	N (Cont)	κw (Exp)	95% CI (Exp)	N (Exp)
Relevance & Adequacy of Content	.454	[.134, .711]	21	.691	[.417, .857]	19
Organization	.361	[.022, .587]	21	.655	[.332, .837]	19
Grammar	.517	[.098, .765]	21	.768	[.493, .901]	19
Mechanics & Spelling	.494	[.173, .707]	21	.726	[.457, .859]	19

The data for the experimental group illustrates that the agreement was moderate to substantial, especially in the Grammar and Lexical Range sections, while in the control group, agreement levels ranged from slight to significant. Overall, the post-test results (Table 4.4) revealed greater consistency among the raters. In Table 4.5, the results of the normality test indicate that the data follow a normal distribution.

Table 5. Shapiro–Wilk Test of Normality Results

Group	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Control Group Pre-Test	,959	19	,544
Experimental Group Pre-Test	,905	19	,059
Control Group Post-Test	,956	19	,500
Experimental Group Post-Test	,930	19	,173

On the other hand, Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for both groups. The pretest results show a similarity in their writing scores collected before using the general-purpose AI-powered chatbots.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Control Group and Experimental Group

Group	Test	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sk.St.	Kt. St.
Control Group	Pretest	6	15.50	11.11	2.60	-0.157	-0.300
	Posttest	6	19.00	12.66	3.34	0.083	-0.285
Experimental Group	Pretest	5.50	16.00	11.26	3.40	-0.406	-1.110
	Posttest	5.00	17.00	11.26	3.75	-0.329	-0.630

The main findings gathered after the intervention session indicate that teacher-centered instruction had the potential to enhance the control group students' writing performance, as indicated by the pre-test results (11.11) and the post-test results (12.66). Regarding the experimental group students, no significant changes were observed before and after adopting the chatbots. The findings in Table 4.7 indicate a statistically significant change in writing performance in control group.

Table 7. Control Group and Experimental Group Students' Writing Scores Total

	Variable	N		ss	sd	t	p
Control Group	Pretest	21	11.11	2.60	20	-2.320	
	Posttest	21	12.66	3.34			
Experimental Group	Pretest	19	11.26	3.40	3.95	0.000	1.000
	Posttest	19	11.26	3.75			

Overall, the results of the statistical analysis of the experimental group students show no statistically significant change in their writing performance after using AI-powered chatbots in their writing classes (pre-test = 11.26, post-test = 11.26). Table 4.8 shows the findings of the investigation conducted to detect changes in the control group across the subcategories of writing skills. It shows that there was a statistically significant change in the "Mechanics and Spelling" section (pre-test=1.88, post-test=2.40). Considering this, teacher-centered writing classes led to improvements in the mechanics and spelling skills of the control group.

Table 8. Pre and Posttest Results Regarding the Sub-Categories of the Control Group

Sub-Categories	**Variable**	**N**		**ss**	**sd**	**t**	**p**
Relevance and Adequacy of Content	Pretest	21	2.80	0.71	20	-0.761	0.456
	Posttest	21	2.97	0.85			
Organization	Pretest	21	2.14	0.57	20	-1.139	0.268
	Posttest	21	2.33	0.67			
Grammar	Pretest	21	2.02	0.69	20	-1.783	0.090
	Posttest	21	2.30	0.84			
Lexical Range	Pretest	21	2.28	0.62	20	-2.000	0.059
	Posttest	21	2.61	0.72			
Mechanics and Spelling	Pretest	21	1.88	0.70	20	-3.859	0.001*
	Posttest	21	2.40	0.75			

However, in Table 9, there was no statistically significant change in the experimental group after using chatbots, despite a slight improvement in the organization (pre-test=2.07, post-test=2.18) and lexical range categories (pre-test=2.31, post-test=2.55).

Table 9. Pre and Posttest Results Regarding the Sub-Categories of the Experimental Group

Sub-Categories	**Variable**	**N**		**ss**	**sd**	**t**	**p**
Relevance and Adequacy of Content	Pretest	19	2.31	0.60	18	0.170	0.867
	Posttest	19	2.28	0.87			
Organization	Pretest	19	2.07	0.55	18	-0.639	0.531
	Posttest	19	2.18	0.76			
Grammar	Pretest	19	2.34	0.95	18	0.818	0.424
	Posttest	19	2.13	0.84			
Lexical Range	Pretest	19	2.31	0.71	18	-1.013	0.324
	Posttest	19	2.55	0.95			
Mechanics and Spelling	Pretest	19	2.18	0.85	18	0.236	0.816
	Posttest	19	2.13	0.76			

The second research question focuses on the students' perceptions after using the general-purpose AI-powered chatbots in their EFL writing classes. The findings are illustrated in Table 10, which presents three main themes: enhancement of lexical capacity, generation of ideas, and awareness of the target language. These themes are also supported by the codes generated from the students' transcripts. Overall, the

results of the interviews show that the students in the experimental group had positive perceptions of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots for developing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, as well as brainstorming and generating ideas.

Table 10. The Themes and Codes of the Students' Responses to the Interview Questions

Themes	**Codes**
Enhancement of the Lexical Capacity	Using high-level words Spelling Using varied advanced vocabulary items
Generation of Ideas	Initiating the ideas for the text
Awareness of the Target Language Structure	Assisting with the use of grammar

Regarding thoughts on developing vocabulary knowledge, most participants held the view that they could find a more advanced and diverse set of vocabulary items through chatbots which can be seen in Table 4.10 "Enhancement of the Lexical Capacity part". For example, participant 9 stated that *"In the past, I always used the same words; now, I use more advanced and suitable vocabulary items."* The participants also noted that AI-powered chatbots helped them become aware of and use appropriate grammar structures, as in the Awareness of the Target Language Structure section in Table 4.10, and assisted them in developing their grammar skills. Student 13 stated that *"They allowed us to use new words and sentence structures and created prototypes about how we should think. We became more experienced in terms of writing. It completed our knowledge gap about words and grammar.*

Regarding the "Generation of Ideas" in Table 4.10, they also stated that these tools serve as guides to help them explore new ideas and start the writing process. Student 8 said, *"These tools have had a positive impact on my writing. They helped us with writing and gave us ideas. For example, when I could not decide on how to start writing, they helped me determine the beginning"*. To sum up, the results of the semi-structured interviews indicate that the students held positive perceptions of integrating general-purpose AI-powered chatbots into their writing classes, as they could provide assistance with the appropriate use of vocabulary items and grammar structures, as well as guidance to initiate the writing process.

Discussion

The overall findings from the quantitative data indicate that teacher-led writing tasks were more effective than those in which students used only general-purpose AI-powered chatbots. Although some studies suggest that general-purpose AI-powered chatbots led to improvements in writing performance (Harunasari, 2023; Yan, 2023), our findings show the opposite, underscoring the importance of the role assigned to teachers. The findings can be interpreted as outcomes of the novelty effect, which refers to using a tool for a while and its effects wearing off over time. Huang et al. (2021) state that this concept means learners may feel less enthusiastic about using a specific tool after using it for a while. This explanation can also be supported by Tsay et al. (2020), who showed that participants tend to lose motivation to use a particular tool once the tool's initial impact diminishes as they become familiar with it. Considering this, the experimental group students were exposed to these tools for five weeks, and they might have begun to lose the motivation and enthusiasm they had at the beginning. Not finding a statistically significant change in the writing performance could also stem from the limited knowledge of writing suitable prompts. The experimental group received a brief introduction to writing prompts that was not very detailed. This can be another reason why these tools failed to improve their writing performance. Despite these findings, there was a slight improvement in the experimental students' vocabulary use with the help of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots. Kim (2018) studies changes in students' vocabulary acquisition using chatbots. A similar result was also found in organizing the text's structure, which refers to the concept of coherence. It can be inferred that general-purpose AI-powered chatbots have the potential to enhance students' ability to write meaningful, logical text. A study conducted by Mahapatra (2024) also shows that using such tools may help develop skills in structuring a text by taking coherence and cohesion into account.

The transcripts show that the participants had positive views on integrating these tools, as they believed the chatbots could provide ways to use a wide range of vocabulary items and grammar structures in context. They could also assist them in generating ideas and brainstorming before starting the writing process. Several studies in the field have similar results, which can support the benefits of these tools as stated by our participants. Sumakul et al. (2021), for example, noted that students using AI-powered chatbots could receive guidance on vocabulary and grammar use. Another study, carried out by Mohamed and Alian (2023), aimed to investigate the use of AI-powered chatbots and students' perceptions of them, and found that students held positive perceptions. Considering their benefits for brainstorming and generating brand-new ideas, Xiao and Zhi (2023) found that the chatbots helped students explore new ideas during their writing process. Although the students in the current study showed little change in their writing skills after using general-purpose AI-powered chatbots, they perceived them as valuable tools for improving their vocabulary and grammar.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to investigate the impact of general-purpose AI-powered chatbots on the English preparatory students' writing skills and their perceptions of using them. The quantitative data did not show a statistically significant change in the writing performance of the students in the experimental group. Nevertheless, there were minor improvements in the lexical range and organization of the ideas sections. On the other hand, the control group students displayed an improvement in their writing skills. Regarding the semi-structured interviews, the students generally have positive perceptions of using these tools in the writing class. Besides, the most obvious finding to emerge from these interviews is that the chatbots were said to improve their vocabulary and grammar and to help them generate ideas. Taken together, these results suggest that general-purpose AI-powered chatbots remain effective at enhancing learners' vocabulary and grammar knowledge. However, the analysis showed no significant change in the experimental group. At the same time, teacher-led instruction plays a vital role in teaching language skills, particularly writing. Considering the students' responses to the interview questions, these tools can create a learning environment where learners can access a wide range of information related to vocabulary and grammar use. These findings also have implications for the understanding that earlier teacher-led instruction still holds an important place in language learning. However, these emerging technologies offer various benefits for learners when used not as the primary teaching means or source in the classroom, but rather as assistants for both the teacher and the learners. The results also indicate that teachers and learners alike need proper, detailed training on how to use these effectively to meet their teaching and learning needs.

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The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used only for a single purpose during the preparation of this manuscript: computing the Weighted Cohen's Kappa coefficient for inter-rater reliability, carried out with ChatGPT Plus. All AI-assisted analytical outputs were manually reviewed, verified, and validated by the authors, and the use of AI is explicitly acknowledged in the Analysis of the Data section. No AI tools were used to generate or revise text, nor to create or modify images or figures. The manuscript fully complies with GiST's ethical and editorial guidelines

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EFL Learners' Critical Literacy Development Using Sketchbooks

Desarrollo de la Literacidad Crítica en Estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera mediante el Uso de Cuadernos de Bocetos

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the use of sketchbooks as a multimodal learning strategy in promoting Critical Literacy (CL) among teenage English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in rural Antioquia (Colombia). Using action research methodology, the study was conducted in a public rural institution, integrating multimodal pedagogy and texts to foster critical engagement with their own socio-cultural realities. Data was collected through observations, student-created sketchbooks, and focus group discussions. Three key findings emerged: (1) The influence of students' involvement with sketchbooks on CL development; (2) The correlation between context-specific materials and learners' sociocultural awareness; (3) and the double-edged role of native language in foreign language acquisition. This research underscores the need for innovative approaches to language learning that encompass critical engagement with socio-cultural realities; thus, it proposes the use of sketchbooks and encourages future researchers to explore additional implementation cycles that balance Critical Literacy (CL) development and EFL proficiency in rural contexts.

Keywords: Sketchbook, Critical Literacy (CL), Multiple Literacies, English as a Foreign language.

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar el uso de los cuadernos de bocetos como una estrategia de aprendizaje multimodal para promover la Literacidad Crítica entre adolescentes que aprenden inglés como lengua extranjera en zonas rurales de Antioquia (Colombia). Utilizando una metodología de investigación-acción, el estudio se desarrolló en una institución pública rural, integrando pedagogía y textos multimodales para fomentar un compromiso crítico con sus propias realidades socioculturales. Los datos se recolectaron a través de observaciones, cuadernos de bocetos creados por los estudiantes y discusiones en grupos focales. Surgieron tres hallazgos clave: (1) La influencia de la participación de los estudiantes con los cuadernos de bocetos en el desarrollo de la LC; (2) La correlación entre materiales específicos del contexto y la conciencia sociocultural de los estudiantes; (3) y el papel de doble filo de la lengua materna en la adquisición de una lengua extranjera. Esta investigación subraya la necesidad de enfoques innovadores para el aprendizaje de lenguas que incluyan un compromiso crítico con las realidades socioculturales; por ello, propone el uso de cuadernos de bocetos e incentiva a futuros investigadores a explorar ciclos adicionales de implementación que equilibren el desarrollo de la Literacidad Crítica y la competencia en inglés como lengua extranjera en contextos rurales.

Palabras clave: Cuaderno de bocetos, Literacidad Crítica (LC), Literacidades múltiples, Inglés como lengua extranjera.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo explorar o uso de cadernos de esboço como uma estratégia de aprendizagem multimodal para promover o Letramento Crítico entre adolescentes que aprendem inglês como língua estrangeira em áreas rurais de Antioquia (Colômbia). Utilizando uma metodologia de pesquisa-ação, o estudo foi realizado em uma instituição pública rural, integrando pedagogia e textos multimodais para fomentar um engajamento crítico com suas próprias realidades socioculturais. Os dados foram coletados por meio de observações, cadernos de esboço criados pelos alunos e discussões em grupos focais. Três achados principais emergiram: (1) A influência do envolvimento dos alunos com os cadernos de esboço no desenvolvimento do LC; (2) A correlação entre materiais específicos ao contexto e a conscientização sociocultural dos alunos; (3) e o papel ambivalente da língua materna na aquisição de uma língua estrangeira. Esta pesquisa enfatiza a necessidade de abordagens inovadoras para a aprendizagem de línguas que envolvam um engajamento crítico com as realidades socioculturais; assim, propõe o uso de cadernos de esboço e incentiva futuros pesquisadores a explorar ciclos adicionais de implementação que equilibrem o desenvolvimento do Letramento Crítico e a proficiência em inglês como língua estrangeira em contextos rurais.

Palavras-chave: Caderno de esboço, Letramento Crítico (LC), Multiletramentos, Inglês como língua estrangeira.

Introduction

Currently, as education seeks to transcend the mere transmission of knowledge, it is crucial to foster critical thinking and social consciousness in students. Authors such as Freire have associated, in their theoretical proposals, ideas that motivate individuals to become agents of social change through critical theories; this idea is also mentioned in the text Building a Culture of Peace through Critical Literacy with the Net Generation by Adunyarittigun (2017) in which the author refers to the importance of Critical Literacy and Critical Consciousness in students as a means to promote peace. Moreover, the implementation of multimodal texts plays a crucial role in this research, as they served both as the means of data collection and as a strategy to promote social reflection among students; Lim et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of multimodal literacy, including diverse of multimodal text to potentiate critical literacy according to specific interest and teachers' objectives in specific contexts. Accordingly, critical thinking and social consciousness in the classroom, in this research, go beyond the transmission of knowledge.

In order to promote teachers' active participation and students' social reflection and transformation, the Critical Emancipatory Research Paradigm was selected, and an action research methodology was used. According to Ramírez et al. (2013), the Critical Emancipatory Research purpose is to eradicate the social injustices and transform society; besides, this promotes a constant reflection and modification in teaching practices helping students to develop critical thinking, which is why the ultimate purpose of this paper is to serve as a proposal to innovative strategies, such as the use of the multimodal texts, to address both the academic and socio-cultural dimensions of education in specific rural environments.

Previous studies have discussed the nature of these social reflections and critical thinking development by considering that critical literacy (CL) in the EFL/ESL context is often separated from the process of learning English, resulting in most teachers not implementing CL in their instruction. (Novianti, et al., 2020; Fajardo, 2015). Following previous studies, Adunyarittigun (2017), associates the idea of Critical Literacy with Paulo Freire, whose critical theory establishes that individuals are fundamental agents of social change. Moreover, Lim et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of literature examining issues related to multimodal pedagogies in the EFL classroom in which the authors show a comprehensive review regarding the potential of multimodal pedagogies in expanding critical literacy within the curriculum and promoting meaningful changes in EFL education. Finally, Yi (2014) examines the practical applications and benefits of multimodal approaches in EFL contexts and its emphasis on the practical benefits of multimodal literacy that leads to a consideration of the role of multimodal texts in language learning.

Despite these theoretical foundations, several research gaps remain. Hidaya, et al. (2020) showcase a perspective in which they refer to the implementation of CL in the EFL class and the lack of didactic resources in the EFL classroom to face CL. Moreover, Novianti et al. (2020) refer to the complexity of Critical Literacy (CL) and the clarifications that English teachers need regarding this concept. During this research process, these gaps were considered through the implementation of sketchbooks as Critical Literacy tools.

The context of this study is characterized by various challenges that significantly affect the educational environment. On one hand, violent patterns within the community, including in families and schools, are seen to shape educational dynamics, as these tensions are reflected in interactions among students, teachers, and parents. Consequently, power dynamics often lead to verbal and physical disagreements, which impede the creation of a harmonious learning environment. On the other hand, temporary or permanent dropout is identified as a key issue, as students are frequently required to balance educational goals with economic responsibilities, which, in turn, disrupt their academic progress. In response, the potential of Critical Literacy to foster social awareness and positive change is investigated.

The challenges identified in the context of this study, including violence within educational environments, power dynamics resulting in conflicts, and the frequent necessity for students to prioritize economic responsibilities over academic goals, underscore the need for innovative educational approaches. Consequently, Critical Literacy (CL) has been recognized as a promising tool to address these issues by fostering reflection, social awareness, and empowerment. Nevertheless, gaps in its implementation have been highlighted by researchers such as Hidaya et al. (2020) and Novianti et al. (2020), who emphasize the lack of didactic resources and the conceptual complexity that teachers must address. Furthermore, while the potential of multimodal approaches in EFL classrooms has been extensively demonstrated by Lim et al. (2022) and Yi (2014), their practical applications remain underexplored, particularly in addressing socio-educational challenges. Therefore, a Critical Emancipatory approach combined with multimodal strategies, such as the use of sketchbooks, has been proposed to bridge these gaps. By focusing on rural EFL students and employing contextually relevant materials such as local newspapers, popular Colombian novels, testimonials from well-known community members (e.g., a coffee seller, the shopkeeper, the learners' grandparents and relatives), images representing community roles such as a bus driver, a coffee picker, or a housewife among others, as well as the learners' own personal narratives, this study aims to contribute to the development of Critical Literacy and English language proficiency, ensuring that the specific needs of this population are effectively addressed and that meaningful educational transformations are promoted.

The present qualitative study, thus, aimed to answer the following question: How does the use of sketchbooks as a multimodal learning strategy influence the development of Critical Literacy and English language learning among teenage EFL students in a rural institution of Colombia? To address this question, the main objective is to describe how the use of sketchbooks as a multimodal learning strategy influences the development of Critical Literacy and English language learning among teenage EFL students in a rural institution. To further elaborate, specific objectives include identifying how the use of contextually relevant materials in the sketchbook shapes students' reflection on their own reality; exploring how the use of the sketchbook as a learning strategy influences the development of English language skills in EFL students; and analyzing the influence of the construction of the sketchbook on the development of Critical Literacy in rural EFL students.

Theoretical framework

Critical literacy education in the EFL classroom is grounded in a multifaceted conceptualization that integrates the principles of critical pedagogy with the acquisition of language skills. This approach acknowledges that literacy extends beyond the basic ability to read and write; it encompasses the capacity to decode, question, and challenge the power structures embedded in written and spoken language. As Freire (1973, 1974) emphasized, dialogue serves as a vital process for uncovering ideologies and power relations, as well as for understanding how individuals are positioned within these systems. Furthermore, Critical Literacy Pedagogy transcends individual cognitive development to prioritize fostering social awareness and transformation by interrogating social and cultural practices that sustain inequalities, biases, and injustices. In this context, students are encouraged to reflect on the broader societal implications of these narratives, a reflection that often becomes a catalyst for activism and social change. This is accomplished by equipping students with the tools to challenge ideologies and advocate for social justice, aligning with Hawkins and Norton (2009), who observed that "because language, culture, and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to address educational inequality" (p. 3). Ultimately, the objective of this pedagogical approach is to cultivate language learners who are not passive consumers of information but rather critical interpreters and active contributors to the ever-evolving discourse communities they inhabit as stated by Sharkey et al. (2016) "curriculum be locally generated and invite learners to critique and transform their realities" (p.3). According to Pessoa and Freitas (2012), hegemonic cultural and ideological discourses structure societies in ways that constrain critical reflection and limit opportunities for transformative social change.

Critical literacy education in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is grounded in a multifaceted conceptualization that integrates the principles of critical pedagogy with the acquisition of language skills. This approach acknowledges

that literacy extends beyond the basic ability to read and write; it encompasses the capacity to decode, question, and challenge the power structures embedded in written and spoken language. As Freire (1973, 1974) emphasized, dialogue serves as a vital process for uncovering ideologies and power relations, as well as for understanding how individuals are positioned within these systems. Furthermore, Critical Literacy Pedagogy transcends individual cognitive development to prioritize fostering social awareness and transformation by interrogating social and cultural practices that sustain inequalities, biases, and injustices. In this context, students are encouraged to reflect on the broader societal implications of these narratives, a reflection that often becomes a catalyst for activism and social change. This is accomplished by equipping students with the tools to challenge ideologies and advocate for social justice, aligning with Hawkins and Norton (2009), who observed that "because language, culture, and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to address educational inequality" (p. 3). Ultimately, the objective of this pedagogical approach is to cultivate language learners who are not passive consumers of information but rather critical interpreters and active contributors to the ever-evolving discourse communities they inhabit.

Multiple Literacies in the EFL Classroom

The concept of multiple literacies in education has gained significant traction in response to the evolving nature of 21st-century communication, given that "Literacy in the 20th century was about extracting and processing pre-coded and – for school students – usually carefully curated information; in the 21st century, it is about constructing and validating knowledge." (OECD, 2021:3). In contemporary education, students encounter multiple ways in which information is presented and knowledge is constructed which demands advanced cognitive skills and critical thinking to navigate and interpret their rapidly changing world. Building on this, Bezemer and Kress (2016) define multimodal pedagogies as "the ways in which the teacher can deliberately design learning experiences using a range of multimodal resources" (p. 45), which aligns with the concept of multiple literacies understood as the intentional integration of diverse semiotic tools in educational settings. Implementing multiple literacies is particularly valuable in EFL contexts, as it can address common challenges such as student disinterest and low motivation by fostering critical engagement with learners' realities, thereby empowering them to transform their environments and moving beyond a focus solely on grammar and vocabulary.

> "When students develop language and literacy skills alongside each other, they become truly equipped to navigate the opportunities and challenges in front of them by gaining a better understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world they live in, engaging critically with important issues, and feeling empowered to make positive change for people and the planet. (p. 5)

Further expanding on this, Yi (2014) describes multimodal literacy learning as involving "the development of multimodal communicative competence, exploring identities, improving academic literacies, and developing critical perspectives" (p. 158). Similarly, Lim et al. (2022) argue that multimodal pedagogies involve "designing opportunities for students to explore and perform ideas and identities using a range of meaning-making resources" (p. 8). These perspectives underscore the necessity for education to adapt to the multimodal nature of modern communication, particularly within diverse sociocultural contexts. Specifically, the integration of multimodal texts in EFL classrooms plays a vital role in promoting critical literacy. As stated by Silver & Blue (2024):

> "'Text' can now describe conversations, videos, infographics, and photographs. Our use of the word 'read' has also expanded: just as we 'read' a written text, we also 'read' visual and multimodal content such as photographs, illustrations, graphics, or videos. In addition, we 'read' social situations, interpreting body language and facial expressions, and we 'read the world,' learning about our planet and local and global communities." (p. 9)

This perspective aligns with Martínez-Lirola's (2016) definition of multimodality as the integrated use of different semiotic resources (e.g., language, image, sound, and music) in texts and communicative events. This definition provides a framework for understanding how diverse texts can be incorporated into language learning to enhance both linguistic competence and critical thinking skills. Martinez-Lirola (2016) also argues that, as the multimodal texts reflect on social matters, "students can be aware of their important role in society if they see themselves as active citizens by analyzing the texts under analysis from a critical perspective." (p.80). This highlights the unique potential of multimodal texts to foster critical engagement with complex ideas. By integrating various types of texts, such as images, audio clips, videos, and podcasts, into the EFL classroom, students are provided with opportunities to interpret, explore, and comprehend diverse perspectives, thereby developing their critical literacy skills when facing social and cultural issues in their own contexts.

Sketchbook as a tool to promote critical literacy in the EFL

This research proposes the implementation of sketchbooks as a specific multimodal tool to promote critical literacy in EFL contexts. Moate et al. (2019) describe that "The sketchbook extracts document the way personally meaningful understanding unfolds as an open-ended dialogue with self and other" (p. 170). This characterization corresponds with our study's objectives, as it highlights the potential of sketchbooks to facilitate introspection, social memory construction, and deep reflection on relevant aspects of students' contexts. The sketchbook, as a personal journal where students can graphically represent their interpretations of reality and narrate it deeply within the

framework of EFL, serves multiple purposes in this study. It acts as a learning tool for language acquisition and social transformation, providing a space for deep reflection and discussion of relevant aspects within students' contexts. Simultaneously, it serves as a data collection instrument, enabling the documentation of students' dialogical encounters while encouraging critical and thoughtful thinking.

By incorporating sketchbooks into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, this study suggests that learners may develop enhanced capacities for questioning assumptions, raising awareness, and ultimately transforming their perspectives on their own realities. This multimodal tool has the potential to foster not only language learning but also critical literacy development. It is anticipated that this innovative approach will promote a deeper understanding of linguistic structures and cultural practices among learners, both in the target language and their native tongue. Furthermore, this method could facilitate more profound reflection on implicit sociocultural norms in language, thus encouraging greater learner autonomy and more active engagement in the knowledge construction process. This research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on multimodal approaches in foreign language education, exploring how sketchbooks can serve as catalysts for critical thinking and transformative learning in EFL contexts.

Methodology

Research design

This study followed the Critical Emancipatory Research Paradigm, which aligns with a qualitative approach. The research utilized Action Research methodology to promote the active participation of educators and students in social transformation through educational practices. Action Research involves a self-reflective, critical, and systematic investigation of teaching environments (Burns, 2010). The aim was to implement the principles of the critical emancipatory paradigm, which, according to Ramírez et al. (2013) seeks to "abolish social injustices, achieve social changes, and transform society" (p. 426). This methodology facilitates continuous reflection and adjustment of teaching strategies, fostering students' development of critical literacy and social consciousness. Frydaki and Katsarou (2013) explored how the use of a sketchbook could serve as a tool for students to engage with and reflect on social issues, aligning with the study's objectives of fostering exploration and critical thinking about these issues.

Participants

The study focused on 22 eighth-grade students from a rural public school in Colombia, aged between 11 and 16 years, including both male and female participants.

To ensure the population was representative of the local community, participants were required to have resided in the rural area for at least two years. This criterion helped capture insights from students with stable ties to the region. Additionally, most students were below the A1 level of proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The school serves 459 students across preschool, primary, and high school levels from both the local area and a nearby village. Operating with around 20 teachers, it follows a humanistic pedagogical model. While the school is equipped with essential facilities like televisions, computers, tablets, boards, a soccer field, and a cafeteria, it lacks reliable internet access and drinking water. It is supported by a local community action group that plays an active role in advocating for the students' welfare and overseeing educational processes.

Instruments

Data was collected using three techniques: observation, sketchbook analysis, and focus group discussions. Seven observation sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, documented students' participation, reflections, and interactions during sketchbook activities. Sketchbook analysis occurred over seven sessions, also 1.5 hours each, capturing students' creative expressions and reflections on personal and social topics in three stages. Finally, three focus group discussions, conducted after each stage and lasting 1.5 hours per session, explored students' feedback on the sketchbook process, their reflections on social issues, and its impact on their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning.

The sketchbook was a primary tool for students to express their understanding and creativity through text, images, videos, and audio. This approach, supported by Moate et al. (2019), allowed students to reflect on their lives and convey their thoughts through multimedia, promoting personal awareness and social transformation. As stated above, this was developed over three stages: In the first stage, "A Trip Down My Street," students explored their neighborhood's history and social dynamics by interviewing community elders and observing local interactions. They documented the development of their village, the relationships among its members, and the roles of local leaders. The second stage, "My Roots," involved personal reflection where students illustrated their family members and wrote about their childhood and family history. They also interviewed their parents to create a story about their family's past. In the final stage, "Plow and Sow," students identified social issues in their community, developed projects to address these issues, and proposed solutions. They presented their projects at an institutional fair to assess the impact of their work on critical literacy and English language.

Data Analysis

Following the application of data collection instruments, including observations, focus groups, and sketchbooks, with eighth-grade students from this rural public institution, the analysis was conducted through coding, categorization, and triangulation. Consequently, this process facilitated the identification of key patterns and themes within the collected data and was informed by various theorists, whose conceptual frameworks guided the interpretation of findings. Moreover, from the coding of journals, focus groups, and sketchbooks, both inductive and deductive codes were identified. These codes, in turn, were subsequently organized into categories, which were related and integrated to generate overarching themes. Thus, the themes proved fundamental in understanding how Critical Literacy was promoted in EFL students through the construction of the sketchbook as a learning strategy.

Findings

This study, as stated before, aims to describe how the use of sketchbooks, as a multimodal learning strategy, influences the development of critical literacy and enriches language learning in rural teenage students. After conducting a thematic analysis of the collected data, three central findings emerged, each shedding light on how critical literacy (CL) development and English language learning can be influenced in the research rural context which can lead readers to better understand their interconnection.

Firstly, the study revealed that CL development is significantly influenced by students' engagement and interest in the sketchbook's construction during the learning process. This finding emphasizes the crucial role of student motivation and active participation in the effectiveness of multimodal tools for fostering critical literacy. Observations revealed a spectrum of engagement levels, with some students expressing reluctance or disinterest, as evidenced by comments like:

> **S5**: "No profe, yo no lo traje, eso es muy pesado y no me cabe en el bolso"
>
> ("No teacher, I didn't bring it, it's too heavy and doesn't fit in my bag")
>
> (Journal 4, April 8th 2024)
>
> **S9**: "Ay, eso a mi siempre se me olvida" ("Oh, I always forget that").
>
> (Journal 4, April 8th 2024)

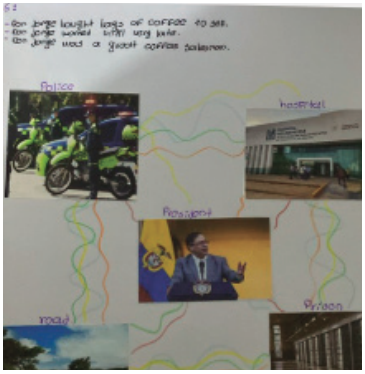
Figure 1. Photograph of the sketchbooks provided to each student.

Firstly, as shown in Figure 1, although the sketchbooks provided to each student served not only as creative spaces but also as tools to observe their engagement and ownership of the learning process, many students were not engaging with them due to their size, the format or the difficulty of carrying them. This suggests that the mere introduction of such tools does not guarantee involvement. These findings align with literature emphasizing the importance of student engagement in multimodal learning approaches, such as Lim et al. (2022), who highlight the potential benefits of integrating multimodal texts like sketchbooks into the classroom. However, the results reinforce the necessity of developing strategies that foster students' motivation and sustained participation.

Secondly, the study found that students' understanding of their own realities depends on the use of authentic material and their L2 competences to produce social reflections. This finding illuminates the interplay between contextually relevant materials and language proficiency in facilitating critical reflection. For instance, during a memory game featuring historical aspects of their community, students demonstrated increased engagement and recognition, noting that the statements were related to their village. As Adunyarittigun , "Students develop and increase their ability to think systematically and critically once they face different activities." Engaging with different types of activities helps students apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, encouraging deeper reflection and fostering the development of critical thinking skills. Figure 2 illustrates one of these instances, where students' personal narratives emerged in response to local newspaper stories, blending linguistic expression with social reflection. This observation directly addresses our research objective of identifying students' understanding of their own reality, while also highlighting the potential of authentic, context-specific materials in fostering critical awareness.

Figure 2. Page from students' sketchbooks showing their personal narratives in response to news from local newspapers.

Figure 3. Page from students' sketchbooks showing their personal narratives in response to news from local newspapers.



As seen in Figure 3, students expanded their reflections by combining visuals and short texts to represent shared community experiences, showing a deeper level of social and linguistic awareness. Conversely, the research revealed that the English learning process is influenced by the use of L1 for translation and by the lack of English knowledge during the use of the sketchbook. This finding underscores the complex relationship between first language (L1) use and second language (L2) acquisition in the context of critical literacy development. A common difficulty in the implementation of CL is the lack of resources and the linguistic competence of students, according to Hidaya, et al. (2020). The observations showed students participating orally in both Spanish and English, often relying on L1 to negotiate meaning and translate concepts. This phenomenon directly relates to our research

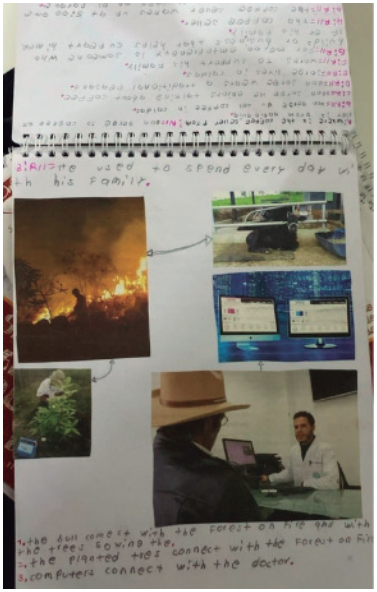
objective of exploring how the sketchbook influences the English learning process, revealing both the challenges and potential strategies in integrating critical literacy development with language acquisition.

The findings reveal interconnected aspects of Critical Literacy (CL) development in a rural Colombian EFL context. Initially, it becomes evident that CL development is influenced by students' engagement and interest in the sketchbook's construction during the learning process, aligning with broader theories about the role of multimodal texts in language learning and critical thinking development. However, our results evidence a more complex picture than what is often described in literature. While Lim et al. (2022) argue that such tools can enhance interest and promote CL, the predominantly low engagement observed challenges assumptions of automatic effectiveness, where deeper cultural and contextual factors such as students' perspectives facing English learning, their level of community involvement, and school time management may explain this outcome, aligning with Pessoa & Freitas (2012) view on hegemonic ideologies shaping educational processes.

Furthermore, the previous finding allowed researchers to see that students' comprehension of their realities is shaped by the implementation of context-specific resources, while their second-language abilities, to generate social reflections, strongly align with the critical literacy educational approach outlined in our conceptual framework. As Freire (1973, 1974) emphasized, dialogue is essential for uncovering ideologies and power relations. In our rural Colombian EFL context, the use of authentic materials facilitated this dialogue, even when students' reflections primarily occurred in their mother tongue given that students demonstrated increased engagement and understanding when presented with materials that resonated with their lived experiences as illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, students represented their community's history based on stories shared by their families where they showed a high level of identification, connection, and awareness; This is in line with Adunyarittigun's (2017) observation that contextually relevant activities promote systematic and critical thinking.

Figure 4. Page from students' sketchbooks illustrating their community's history as narrated by their families.

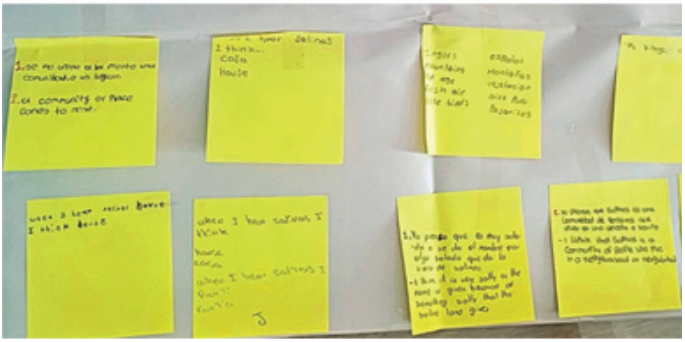
Figure 5. Page from students' sketchbooks illustrating their community's history as narrated by their families.



A tension emerged between the depth of reflection and English use, as reflections occurred predominantly in L1. While this supported critical engagement, limited English proficiency restricted students' ability to articulate complex ideas, a dynamic

feature also observed by Hidaya et al. (2020). As Moate et al. (2019) noted, sketchbooks foster meaningful connections, but without sufficient linguistic support, their potential as EFL tools is constrained. Bezemer and Kress (2016) argue that L1 use in multimodal learning should be understood as part of a broader meaning-making process rather than as an EFL failure. As shown in Figure 6, although students' language expression was limited and the use of their L1 frequently emerged, this did not impede meaning making during activities such as focus groups. In fact, the keyword they used to define their village carried significant meaning for them, demonstrating that L1 can play a valuable role in constructing and expressing understanding. Similarly, Yi (2014) emphasizes that multimodal practices help learners negotiate identities and engage critically. This reliance on L1, shaped by barriers such as fear of mistakes, reflects Fajardo's (2015) assertion on the need to address sociocultural contexts in CL implementation.

Figure 6. Insights emerging from the first focus group.



Ultimately, this study outlines the need to analyze the mediation of the mother tongue in foreign language acquisition, as it served as a learning strategy for this particular group of students to transition to English expression. The reliance on L1 appears to be a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including affective barriers such as the shame of committing mistakes or perceived insufficient knowledge, which hindered students' comfort in using English. This is in line with Fajardo's (2015) observation that "the implementation of critical literacy in EFL requires careful consideration of sociocultural contexts and students' experiences" (p. 45). Moreover, the use of L1 in this context can be seen as a scaffolding tool that supports students' engagement with critical thinking tasks while they develop their English language skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the integration of sketchbooks as a multimodal learning strategy fostered significant progress in students' critical literacy (CL) development and English language learning. In line with Adunyarittigun (2017), the results demonstrate that when learners engage with authentic and contextually relevant materials, they are encouraged to reflect critically on their realities and socio-cultural environments. Similarly to what was observed in the study *Developing a Deeper Understanding of Community-Based Pedagogies with Teachers: Learning With and From Teachers in Colombia* the implementation of socially relevant classroom projects revealed that "their projects increased student engagement and motivation, fostered or enhanced existing student-teacher relationships and school-family engagement, and increased student and teacher awareness and appreciation of local knowledge and its value as a curriculum resource" (Sharkey et al., 2016, p. 8). However, consistent with Gómez (2018), this study also indicates that meaningful engagement depends on the learners' motivation, the contextual adaptation of pedagogical tools, and the teacher's ability to guide critical discussions within a supportive learning environment.

The sketchbook emerged as a powerful multimodal tool for combining linguistic, visual, and reflective dimensions of learning. Its use prompted students to observe, narrate, and reinterpret their community and family dynamics, thereby promoting social awareness and agency. These outcomes align with Freire's (1973, 1974) conception of education as a dialogic and emancipatory process. Students' reflections within the sketchbook allowed them to 'read the world' critically an idea reinforced by Silver & Blue (2024), which emphasizes that "when students develop language and literacy skills alongside each other, they become truly equipped to navigate the opportunities and challenges in front of them by gaining a better understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world they live in, engaging critically with important issues, and feeling empowered to make positive change for people and the planet." This perspective underscores how sketchbooks served as an avenue for multimodal expression that extended beyond linguistic boundaries.

Furthermore, this study corroborates findings from Lim et al. (2022) and Yi (2014), who argue that multimodal pedagogies enhance critical literacy by engaging students through multiple semiotic resources. Nevertheless, it challenges the assumption that multimodality inherently guarantees engagement. In this study, a noticeable gap in students' participation revealed that sociocultural and affective factors such as low English proficiency, fear of making mistakes, and limited confidence may hinder full participation. This finding resonates with Fajardo (2015), who highlights that CL implementation in EFL settings requires addressing sociocultural constraints and learners' affective barriers.

The reliance on the first language (L1) emerged as both a facilitator and a limitation within the CL process. As Bezemer and Kress (2016) explain, L1 use forms part of a broader meaning-making process rather than a failure in second language acquisition. In this context, students' use of L1 enabled deeper reflection and comprehension of complex social realities, supporting their critical engagement. However, excessive dependence on L1 restricted opportunities for oral communication in English. This dual role reflects a dynamic tension between cognitive support and linguistic challenge in rural EFL classrooms. Thus, while the sketchbook successfully promoted critical thinking, its full potential as a language learning tool requires scaffolding strategies that progressively build confidence in L2 production.

In summary, the study extends previous research on multimodal and critical literacy pedagogies by demonstrating how sketchbooks can bridge the gap between students' linguistic development and social awareness. It highlights that meaningful CL learning occurs when tasks are contextually relevant, multimodally rich, and grounded in learners' lived experiences. This reinforces the need for EFL teachers, especially in rural settings, to act as mediators who integrate authentic materials, foster dialogue, and design opportunities for students to construct knowledge through critical reflection.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights gained, this study faced several limitations. The first was the limited duration of the intervention, which constrained the depth of student engagement with the sketchbook and restricted opportunities for longitudinal observation. The second limitation was the students' limited English proficiency, which reduced their ability to express reflections in L2 and led to frequent reliance on their native language. The third limitation involved affective barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and resistance to English use, which limited oral participation.

These constraints suggest that future research should implement extended action research cycles, ideally within bilingual or immersive environments where the teacher student bond is strongly present. Such settings would ensure greater continuity, linguistic support, and a deeper engagement with students' lived realities through the use of sketchbooks. As stated by Sharkey et al. (2016), *"Parents and community members became linked to the curriculum" and "the teachers and students' increased awareness of and appreciation of local knowledge and its legitimate, useful role in the curriculum*" (p. 9) which illustrates how educational practices can bridge classroom learning with community realities. These insights emphasize the transformative potential of involving local knowledge and stakeholders in the curriculum to promote more culturally responsive and participatory pedagogies. Additionally, teachers should employ systematic scaffolding strategies to progressively enhance learners' confidence

and competence in English. Finally, continued incorporation of contextually relevant and authentic materials is recommended to sustain engagement, strengthen critical literacy, and promote meaningful educational transformation in rural EFL contexts.

Conclusions

This research, focused on the description of learners' critical literacy development and language learning through the use of sketchbooks, makes significant contributions to the fields of critical literacy, multimodality, and EFL learning, particularly by deepening the understanding of these concepts within rural educational contexts. Addressing gaps in literature, it challenges the widespread assumption that multimodality automatically enhances engagement. Instead, the findings underscore that without intentional, relevant, and authentic connections to students' experiences, multimodal texts risk becoming mere tools devoid of meaningful impact. Aligned with Hawkins and Norton's (2009) assertion that language, culture, and identity are inherently interconnected, this study emphasizes the pivotal role of teachers in addressing educational inequalities.

Furthermore, it introduces the sketchbook as an innovative multimodal learning strategy, extending its traditional applications by incorporating authentic materials. This approach broadens the scope of multimodal texts, demonstrating their potential to facilitate self-exploration, foster community awareness, and promote critical reflection. By encouraging learners to critically engage with their realities, the study provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations to navigate and address the challenges associated with this tool, as highlighted throughout the analysis.

This study employed an action research methodology, characterized by multiple cycles of development, with this being the initial cycle. It offers valuable insights into the implementation of Critical Literacy in rural EFL Colombian contexts benefiting both current readers and future researchers. While challenges were evident, the findings provide actionable guidance. Future research could further investigate the role of multimodal pedagogies, the strategic integration of L1, and the inclusion of locally relevant materials in enhancing both language development and critical literacy skills.

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Augmenting Students' Reading Comprehension Using Source Culture-Oriented Texts: Eighth-Grade in Focus

Mejorar la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes mediante textos de origen cultural: octavo grado en foco

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Abstract

This study aimed to enhance eighth-grade students' reading comprehension through source culture-oriented texts using a design-based research approach. It involved 67 students (29 males and 38 females) from two purposefully selected primary schools. Baseline data were collected using document analysis, classroom observation, and pre-reading tests. Initial findings revealed significant challenges in reading comprehension, with only 26.5% of students at School A and 18.2% at School B scoring above 50%. In phase II, local culture-based texts were developed, reviewed, and refined by experts. In Phase III, the intervention materials were implemented in two phases over 16 sessions across 8 weeks at each school. The evaluation included both formative and summative assessments, including reflections from observation results, post-tests, and delayed post-tests. The inferential statistical analysis showed significant improvements in students' scores ($p = 0.000$) in the one-way ANOVA, indicating the intervention's effectiveness. The results suggest that the use of culturally relevant texts led to improved reading comprehension, addressing issues such as low comprehension skills identified in Phase I. The study recommends further exploration of culturally relevant materials across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Local culture, Design-based research, Baseline, augment, EFL, reading comprehension, Higher education.

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo mejorar la comprensión lectora de estudiantes de octavo grado mediante textos orientados a la cultura de origen, utilizando un enfoque de investigación basado en el diseño. Participaron 67 estudiantes (29 hombres y 38 mujeres) de dos escuelas primarias seleccionadas específicamente. Se recopilaron datos iniciales mediante análisis de documentos, observación en el aula y pruebas previas a la lectura. Los resultados iniciales revelaron dificultades significativas en la comprensión lectora, ya que solo el 26,5 % de los estudiantes de la Escuela A y el 18,2 % de la Escuela B obtuvieron una puntuación superior al 50 %. En la fase II, expertos desarrollaron, revisaron y perfeccionaron textos basados en la cultura local. En la fase III, los materiales de intervención se implementaron en dos fases a lo largo de 16 sesiones durante 8 semanas en cada escuela. La evaluación incluyó valoraciones formativas y sumativas, incluyendo reflexiones sobre los resultados de las observaciones y pruebas posteriores, tanto iniciales como diferidas. El análisis estadístico inferencial mostró mejoras significativas en las puntuaciones de los estudiantes, con valores p de 0,000 en el ANOVA de una vía, lo que indica la efectividad de la intervención. Los resultados sugieren que el uso de textos culturalmente relevantes mejoró la comprensión lectora, abordando problemas como las bajas habilidades de comprensión identificadas en la Fase I. El estudio recomienda seguir explorando materiales culturalmente relevantes en diversos entornos educativos.

Palabras clave: cultura local, investigación basada en diseño, línea base, inglés como lengua extranjera, escritura académica.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo aprimorar a compreensão leitora de estudantes do oitavo ano por meio de textos orientados à cultura de origem, utilizando uma abordagem de pesquisa baseada em design. Participaram 67 estudantes (29 meninos e 38 meninas) de duas escolas primárias selecionadas especificamente. Os dados iniciais foram coletados por meio de análise documental, observação em sala de aula e testes prévios de leitura. Os resultados iniciais revelaram dificuldades significativas na compreensão leitora, uma vez que apenas 26,5% dos estudantes da Escola A e 18,2% da Escola B obtiveram pontuação superior a 50%. Na Fase II, especialistas desenvolveram, revisaram e aperfeiçoaram textos baseados na cultura local. Na Fase III, os materiais de intervenção foram implementados em duas etapas ao longo de 16 sessões durante 8 semanas em cada escola. A avaliação incluiu análises formativas e somativas, incluindo reflexões sobre os resultados das observações e dos testes posteriores, tanto iniciais quanto tardios. A análise estatística inferencial mostrou melhorias significativas nas pontuações dos estudantes, com valores de p de 0,000 na ANOVA unidirecional, indicando a efetividade da intervenção. Os resultados sugerem que o uso de textos culturalmente relevantes melhorou a compreensão leitora, abordando problemas como as baixas habilidades de compreensão identificadas na Fase I. O estudo recomenda continuar explorando materiais culturalmente relevantes em diversos contextos educacionais.

Palavras-chave: cultura local, pesquisa baseada em design, linha de base, inglês como língua estrangeira, escrita acadêmica.

In the era of globalization, proficient reading skills are crucial to achieve educational goals. Reading enables learners to gain knowledge, develop competencies, and beliefs through engagement with different texts. In second- and foreign-language contexts, it plays a vital role in supporting learners in reconstructing the author's intended meaning (Kusumarasdyati, 2023; Oktarina et al., 2022). Developing reading skills is thus essential, enabling learners to access books, journals, and other materials to support academic achievement (Ciocoi-Pop, 2020; Ratminingsih et al., 2020).

In contexts with limited English exposure, such as Ethiopia, reading becomes the primary means of language acquisition. However, effective reading requires more than decoding; it involves understanding both implicit and explicit information (Selvathurai & Ismail, 2024). Comprehension is a core aspect of the reading process and essential for effective language learning (Hayati & Puspitaloka, 2022). Students' academic performance significantly depends on their ability to read and understand textbooks (Mulata & Regassa, 2022). However, limited background knowledge and unfamiliarity with content often affect comprehension. To overcome these challenges, connecting reading materials to students' cultural backgrounds is necessary. Incorporating local culture, experiences, and values into reading materials activates prior knowledge and creates meaningful engagement (Moneka et al., 2024). Studies show that culture-oriented local texts can significantly enhance comprehension and motivation (Ratminingsih et al., 2020; Intang et al., 2023). For textbooks to function as effective learning tools, they must reflect students' identities and local realities (Hadianto et al., 2022).

In Ethiopia, English is taught as a foreign language through school-based instruction, and students often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. They also come from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and face difficulties in vocabulary and grammar, which significantly affect their reading comprehension abilities (Koyra & Jarssa, 2021). National learning assessments consistently show low performance. The third national learning assessment reported an average reading comprehension score for eighth-grade students of 43.9 (NEAEA, 2004), while the fifth recorded a mean score of 23.4, which was below the basic level, despite a baseline mean of 64.5 (NEAEA, 2016). These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions. Thus, the study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What cultural elements and dimensions are incorporated in the reading texts of the eighth-grade English textbook?

RQ2: What challenges do students face while reading the text in the eighth-grade English textbook?

RQ3: Does the instructional intervention using local culture-oriented texts lead to a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension?

Literature Review

The Nature of Culture

Culture is a broad and multifaceted concept encompassing mental habits, moral values, customs, and artistic expression that define societies (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Brown (2007) describes culture as a system of traditions, skills, arts, and tools, while Khan (2014) views it as a way of life, including foods, customs, and traditions. Culture also encompasses shared systems of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and expected behaviors within society. Lee (2009) categorized into four dimensions: aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and pragmatic, and distinguished between big 'C' culture (literature, art, and history) and small 'c' culture (family life, food, and customs). The semantic and pragmatic aspects involve both practical and contextual knowledge essential for communication. Teo (2016) argues that 'c' culture plays a vital role in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Language and culture are interdependent, with language serving as a medium for expressing and transmitting culture (Kramsch, 2012). In the Ethiopian context, cultural practices such as greetings (e.g., nodding one's head, shaking hands, and placing one's hand on the chest), traditional foods (e.g., *Injera*, *Koch),* and drinks (e.g., Tej or *Tela)* demonstrate this connection. Krasniqi (2019) explains that language and culture mutually shape each other through communication patterns, behaviors, and historical contexts.

Local Culture

Local culture refers to shared practices, traditions, and daily experiences in a specific region (Ratminingsih, 2020). It plays a vital role in community identity and can enrich learning by integrating familiar contexts into instruction (Adebola et al., 2022). Using it in language learning provides students with familiar content, enhancing comprehension and self-expression (Nambiar et al., 2020). For instance, incorporating topics such as traditional games, festivals, and ceremonies encourages students to draw upon their prior knowledge while practicing language skills. However, as Khan (2014) notes, cultural content should be selected carefully. Therefore, cultural content chosen for foreign language teaching should inspire students, be inclusive, and foster positive attitudes toward language learning. Brown (2001) outlines strategies for integrating culture into language education, including sociolinguistic instruction, comparative analysis, and the use of culturally appropriate materials, emphasizing helping students examine their own cultural assumptions through reflective tasks.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides a structured representation of a study's variables and their relationships (SAGE, 2021). In this study, the framework guides the integration of local culture-based reading materials and outlines how these materials support the development of reading comprehension.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

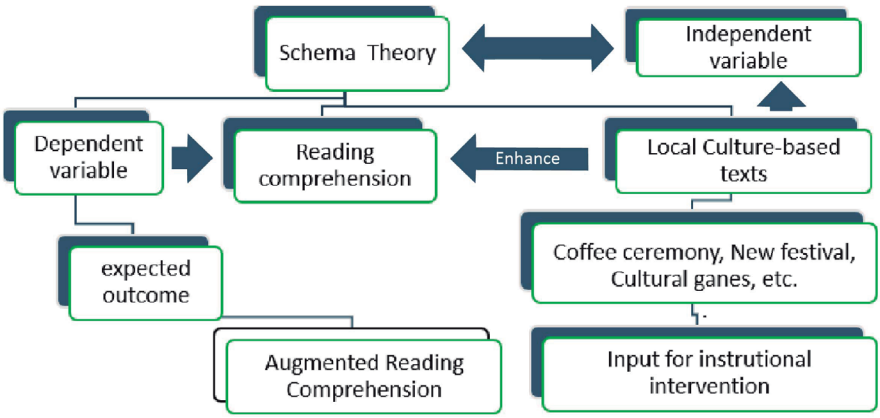


Figure 1 illustrates how schema emphasizes the role of background knowledge in reading comprehension. Nassaji (2002) explained that the schema theory deals with pre-existing knowledge structures stored in the mind and how readers combine their previous knowledge with the text. Thus, researchers believe that background knowledge helps students understand texts. The framework connects teaching local culture-oriented texts (independent variable) to this theory, showing a reciprocal relationship between schema and cultural background. It also highlights how background knowledge enhances the effectiveness of the dependent variables. The goal is to foster active readers with good comprehension skills as the final outcome.

Methodology

Research Approach

The study employed a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach to assess students' current reading comprehension abilities, identify challenges, and implement a culturally relevant intervention. DBR is a flexible, iterative approach aimed at improving educational practices through a cycle of analysis, development, implementation, and

evaluation involving collaboration among practitioners, educators, and students (Al-Busaidi & Yusuf, 2021). An exploratory sequential mixed-method was used, starting with qualitative data collection and analysis to explore students' difficulties, followed by a quantitative phase to measure the intervention's effectiveness (Creswell, 2014).

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in two government primary schools: Umity (SA) and Bandera (SB), located in Bonga Town Administration, Kafa Zone, Southwest Ethiopia People's Regional State (SWEPRS). Both semi-urban schools with diverse student populations were chosen purposefully for their accessibility, willingness to collaborate, and suitability for effective engagement. Participants included two sections of eighth-grade students: Section B from Umity Primary School (SA) (18 female and 16 male) and Section D from Bandera Primary School (SB) (20 female and 13 male) based on their academic performance, regular attendance, and perceived ability to engage with the intervention meaningfully. The majority of students from both schools were aged 14-15. Furthermore, two English teachers with availability, one from each school, participated in the study. Both held bachelor's degrees in English and had 9-12 years of teaching experience.

Instruments

Four primary data sources, a document analysis, classroom observations, reading comprehension tests, and teachers' reflections, were utilized. In the initial analysis phase, the study examined the cultural relevance of reading texts from an eighth-grade English textbook through document analysis. A pre-reading test assessed students' baseline comprehension of culturally unfamiliar texts. Classroom observations evaluated students' engagement and challenges in interacting with these texts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included document review, classroom observation, and a pre-reading test to identify gaps and areas requiring intervention. Document analysis and classroom observations were examined thematically, while the pre-reading test data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Using SPSS version 20, the researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation of students' pre-reading test scores to assess the initial comprehension level. After the intervention, data from pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA to evaluate changes over time. Qualitative data from classroom interaction and practitioners' reflections were analyzed thematically to capture shifts in engagement, teaching practices, and students' responses to local culture-based reading materials.

Figure 2. Model for Intervention

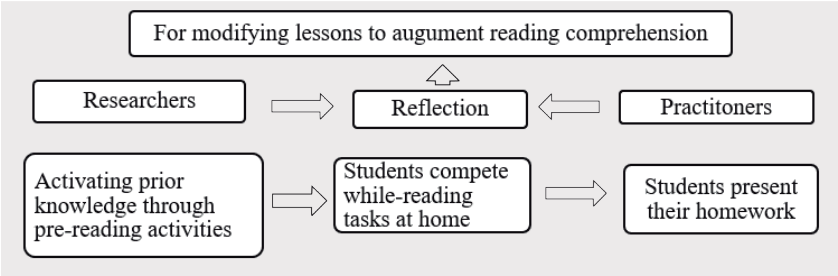


Figure 2 illustrates the intervention model techniques. First, students engage in local culture-based pre-reading activities during the lesson introduction. Then, they receive reading texts with while-reading activities to complete independently at home. Assigning homework can have a positive impact on students' learning and academic performances (Songsirisak & Jitpranee, 2019). Hence, in this experiment, students shared their work in small groups and presented it briefly to the class. Finally, they discussed their understanding of the new texts at the conclusion of the lesson. After each lesson, teachers reflected in a journal to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and to suggest improvements for future lessons.

Results

Phase I: Identifying Problems Based on the Research Questions

This phase addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What cultural elements and dimensions are incorporated in the reading texts of the eighth-grade English textbook?

RQ2: What challenges do students face while reading the text in the eighth-grade English textbook?

Results of Textbook Analysis

To answer RQ1, a detailed textbook analysis was conducted to examine the cultural elements embedded in the eighth-grade English textbook and assess their relevance to students' lived experiences. The analysis focused on the number of units, types of texts, reading activities, and illustrations, particularly their alignment with students' cultural

contexts. Each unit includes reading passages, vocabulary tasks, and comprehension activities. Using criteria set by Hakim and Wahyuni (2024), the cultural dimension and elements of the content, including pre-reading prompts, were examined, as indicated in Figures 3 and 4 below:

Figure 3. Cultural Dimensions

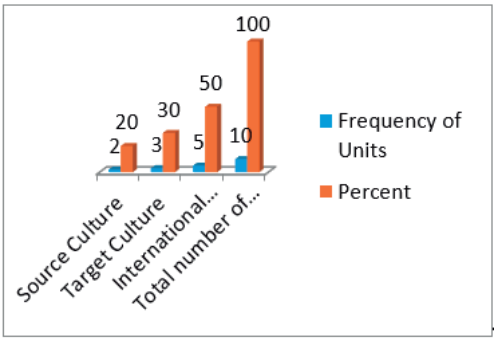
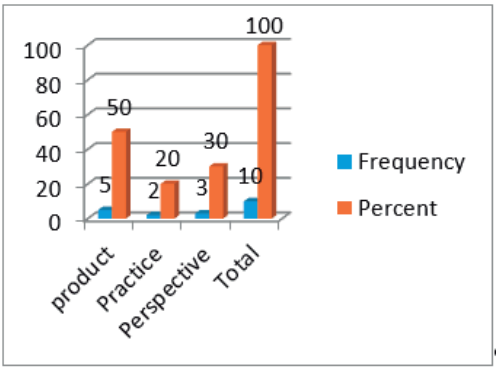


Figure 4. Cultural Elements



As shown in Figure 3, two texts (20%) belong to the source culture, three (30%) to the target culture, and five (50%) to the international culture. The findings indicate a greater emphasis on target and international culture. However, scholars argue that understanding one's own culture is essential before engaging with others (Baker, 2011). Thus, students tend to perform better when the reading materials relate to their background knowledge. On the other hand, Figure 4 shows five (50%) of the cultural elements in the English textbook related to cultural products from national and international contexts (units two, three, four, and ten), while cultural practices account

for only two (20%) of the elements, appearing in units one and seven. The remaining three (30%) represent global cultural perspectives. These findings suggest that the textbook emphasizes products rather than practices such as festivals, ceremonies, and daily life experiences. Shah et al. (2012) argue that students are more motivated to learn English when the language is presented in a context they can relate to.

Results of Classroom Observations

Before classroom observations, the researchers discussed the study's objectives, procedures, and the role of practitioners, explaining the collaborative nature of Design-Based Research (DBR). With practitioners' consent, the preliminary study commenced, focusing on observing teachers' classrooms as they taught reading lessons from students' English textbooks. The aim was to assess students' reading comprehension and engagement. An observation with 12 items, 4 for each reading stage (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading), was used. Three observations were conducted per school: October 10, 12, and 13, 2023, at School A (SA), and October 17, 18, and 20, 2023, at School B (SB). The baseline observation results indicate several issues in reading comprehension. Although SA had 34 students and SB had 33, the number of active participants at each reading stage was low, indicating several key challenges. For instance, while a few students showed the ability to answer comprehension questions correctly (6 of 34 in SA and 9 of 33 in SB during Observation 1 and 3), many students struggled with these tasks. This is evident from the relatively low number of students completing comprehension tasks on time, especially in the later observations. Despite some improvement in Observation 2, where 15 of 34 students in SA and 11 of 33 students in SB answered questions correctly, many students remained passive. Minimal engagement with tasks such as predicting the topic based on prior knowledge or cultural background further underscores the comprehension gap. This suggests that students are not fully connecting the reading material to their existing knowledge or experiences, resulting in lower comprehension.

Results of Pre-Reading Test

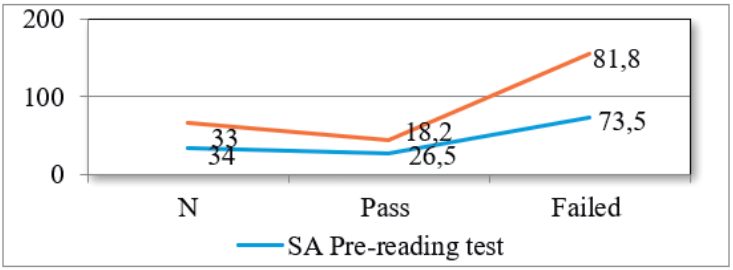
To address **RQ2**, a pre-reading comprehension test was administered to determine the current reading comprehension level of 8th-grade students at both schools.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Reading Tests of SA and SB

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SA Pre-reading test	34	5	14	8.65	2.308
SB Pre-reading test	33	6	12	9.00	1.732

As can be seen in the table above, the mean scores of SA and SB were (M=8.65 and 9.00 with SD=2.308 and 1.732), respectively. The maximum scores of two students from SA and three students from SB were 14 and 12out of 22, respectively. This suggests that students' reading comprehension ability is very poor.

Figure 5. Reading Performance of Both Schools



As shown in Figure 5, the pre-test frequency distributions for both SA and SB indicated that 9 (26.5%) and 6 (18.2%) participants, respectively, scored above 50%, while the remaining participants scored below 50%. This suggests a serious problem with students' comprehension.

Implications of the Baseline Study

The baseline assessment results revealed that students faced significant challenges with text comprehension, as evidenced by many students scoring below 50% on reading comprehension tests. National learning assessments also indicate similar issues. Moreover, document analysis demonstrated that students had difficulty engaging with unfamiliar topics, such as traffic rules and regulations, which were less relevant for students living in rural and suburban areas, significantly affecting their ability to comprehend the material. Classroom observations further indicated that students

rarely activated prior knowledge to aid their understanding of texts and frequently relied on teachers for answers rather than attempting to solve comprehension issues on their own. To address these challenges, using culturally relevant reading materials alongside interactive, student-centered activities could enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement. In this regard, Altin and Saracaloglu (2018) found that incorporating cultural materials into reading comprehension instruction can enhance students' vocabulary and ease comprehension difficulties.

Phase II: Development

The reading texts used in the intervention were originally developed by the researchers to reflect students' local culture, incorporating familiar themes such as traditional drinks, mourning ceremonies, local foods, marriage, traditional games, the Coffee ceremony, and the New Year Festival. The development process emphasized cultural relevance, linguistic simplicity, and genre suitability, using descriptive and narrative forms at a lower English level. The content was based on firsthand cultural knowledge and community insights. A validation discussion group with experienced English language educators was held in November 2023 at the College of Education. Then, the content was assessed for alignment with instructional goals, age and language appropriateness, and clarity in presentation and structure.

Phase III: Implementation

The first intervention took place at School A from December 11, 2023, to February 1, 2024, during the first semester. After refining the materials and data collection tools, the second iteration was conducted at School B from March 26, 2024, to May 15, 2024, in the second semester, using the same tools and evaluation methods. The intervention involved eight-week sessions focused on local culture-oriented reading texts, conducted by practitioners at both schools. Each week included two sessions, totaling 16 treatment sessions.

Phase IV: Evaluation

In this phase, the effectiveness of the intervention materials was assessed through formative and summative evaluations, following Lu's (2022) suggestions. The formative evaluation involved expert review, classroom observations, and reflections. The expert commented on innovative ideas and suggested that the intervention materials could benefit students from Grade 8 through higher education, particularly by addressing declining reading motivation driven by distractions such as social media. After reviewing the prototype, the experts provided feedback, recommending

adjustments such as reducing time-consuming activities and shortening texts for easier comprehension. Based on this input, the intervention materials were revised to better meet the intervention's goals.

Results of Pos-Reading Tests

RQ3: Does the instructional intervention using local culture-oriented texts lead to a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension?

Before conducting inferential analysis, the reliability and normality of data were examined, as recommended by Kozak (2023). Reliability was assessed using test-retest data from 67 participants across both schools prior to the intervention. Following the Gravetter and Wallnau (2015) guidelines, a one-way ANOVA was then employed to determine significant differences among pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test scores.

Table 2. The Test Re-Test Correlation Result of Reading Comprehension

		Test 1	**Test 2**
Test 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.761**
Test 1	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Test 1	N	67	67
Test 2	Pearson Correlation	.761**	1
Test 2	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
Test 2	N	67	67

The test-retest reliability score of .761, with a p-value less than .05, suggests a high level of consistency over time for the tests conducted. This indicates that the results are reliable and the correlation supports the validity of the study's findings.

Table 3. Result of School A and B's Reading Test of Normality

		Kolmogo-rov-Smir-nova	**Kolmogo-rov-Smir-nova**	**Kolmogo-rov-Smir-nova**	**Shapi-ro-Wilk**	**Shapi-ro-Wilk**	**Shapi-ro-Wilk**
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SA	Pre- test	.150	33	.058	.942	33	.080
SA	Prost- test	.088	33	.200*	.979	33	.750
SA	Delay Post-test	.129	33	.177	.963	33	.305
SB	Pre- test	.142	33	.087	.943	33	.082
SB	Post- test	.147	33	.068	.962	33	.285
SB	Delay Post-test	.135	33	.133	.968	33	.419

The Shapiro-Wilk test results for SA, with p-values of 0.08, 0.750, and 0.305 for the pre-test, post-test, and delay post-test, respectively, indicate that the data are normally distributed. Similarly, the Shapiro-Wilk test results for SB, with p-values of .082, .285, and .419 for the pre-test, post-test, and delay post-test, respectively, suggest that the data are also normally distributed.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of SA and SB's Pre-Post and Delay Post-Reading Tests

Codes	**Time Point**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. D**	**Std. Error**	**95% Confidence Interval for Mean**	**95% Confidence Interval for Mean**
Codes	Time Point	N	Mean	Std. D	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
SA	Pre-Test	34	8.65	2.308	.396	7.84	9.45
SA	Post-Test	34	10.56	2.501	.429	9.69	11.43
SA	Delay Post-Test	34	13.56	2.414	.414	12.72	14.40
SB	Pre-Test	33	9.00	1.732	.301	8.38	9.61
SB	Post-Test	33	10.66	1.979	.344	9.96	11.36
SB	Delay Post-Test	33	14.18	2.518	.438	13.28	15.07

Table 4 shows that both schools, SA and SB, improved their scores from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. For example, SA's mean score increased from 8.65 to 13.56, while Group SB's mean score rose from 9.00 to 14.18. This suggests that performance improves over time for both groups.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Test Results for School A and School B

School code	**Time Group**	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
SA	Between Groups	416.843	2	208.422	35.91	.000
SA	Within Groups	574.529	99	5.803		
SB	Between Groups	461.838	2	230.919	52.25	.000
SB	Within Groups	424.242	96	4.419		

1

The one-way ANOVA results for both groups, SA and SB, indicate statistically significant differences across time points. For School A, the F-value is 35.91 and the P-value is .000, indicating a significant difference. Likewise, for School B, the F-value is 52.25 and the P-value is .000, indicating a significant difference. Thus, the results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores across the different time points (pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test) for each school.

Discussion

The study aimed to enhance students' reading comprehension using culture-oriented local texts through a design-based research (DBR) framework implemented in four phases. Phase I indicated significant challenges in students' reading comprehension at both participating schools. Textbook analysis and classroom observations revealed that students were struggling with unfamiliar texts, difficult vocabulary, and low engagement. Pre-test results further support this, with only 26.5% of students at School A and 18.2% at School B scoring above 50%, indicating the need for intervention. In line with this, the studies' findings suggested that incorporating local culture into reading materials could promote stronger engagement and enhance reading comprehension by connecting texts to students' experiences (Fu, 2018; Aminullah et al., 2019; Royani, 2012). This emphasized the need for culturally relevant materials to make learning more engaging and relevant, thereby enhancing students' reading comprehension skills. In phase II, the intervention materials were designed to incorporate culturally familiar elements, such as traditional games, food, ceremonies, and local festivals. Experts reviewed the initial materials and suggested revisions, such as shortening texts and simplifying vocabulary to better match students' reading level (Miller & Kim, 2021). This revision helped ensure that materials were both culturally relevant and cognitively appropriate, aligning with the intervention's educational goals.

In phase III, the intervention was implemented over eight weeks at each school. With teacher support, the localized reading texts were incorporated into the existing curriculum. This practical phase enabled real-time feedback and iterative refinement in DBR. The final phase involved both formative and summative assessments to estimate the effectiveness of the intervention. Formative evaluations, including observations and expert reviews, provided ongoing feedback during the intervention, enabling adjustments as needed. Summative evaluations, including post-tests and delayed post-tests, assessed the intervention's overall impact after its completion. The assessment phase, or semi-summative evaluation, is crucial for determining whether an intervention achieves its objectives (Barab & Squire, 2004). The test-retest reliability score (0.761, $p<.05$) confirmed consistency, while the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated normality, allowing for one-way ANOVA. Results showed significant changes in reading comprehension across both schools. For instance, School A's mean score

increased from 8.65 (pre-test) to 13.56 (delayed post-test), and School B's from 9.00 to 14.18. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of culturally relevant reading materials in improving comprehension and motivation (Altin & Saracaloglu, 2018; Chegeni & Servati, 2020; Nambiar et al., 2020). In general, the results demonstrate that using local culture-based texts helped address the reading comprehension issues identified in Phase I and contributed to improving learning objectives.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The study found that incorporating local culture-oriented texts significantly improved eighth-grade students' reading comprehension. Initially, challenges such as low interest and difficulty comprehending textbook content were addressed through the intervention. Both statistical analysis and classroom feedback confirmed that the intervention material enhanced students' engagement and comprehension. School B is showing slightly higher scores, though improvement is evident in both contexts. In line with this, Darong (2022) suggested that local culture-based texts can help students become familiar with the materials. Furthermore, Wutun (2018) suggested that incorporating local culture-based reading materials into language textbooks can foster a positive, engaging learning environment in the classroom. Therefore, educators should consider using local culture-based texts in their teaching. Such additional materials can address comprehension issues and make learning more relevant to students' lives. Future research should examine the long-term effects of culture-based interventions across diverse settings and broader populations.

Limitations

Despite its promising results, the study has several limitations. First, the sample size may not fully represent the broader population of eighth-grade students in the study area, though it was adequate for preliminary findings; second, even though the intervention lasted several weeks, it may not be sufficient to sustain long-term improvements in students' reading comprehension skills.

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We Believe in CLT, But...': Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Implementation Challenges

Creemos en el CLT, pero...: Percepciones de los profesores iraníes de EFL y desafíos de implementación

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Abstract

Despite its official adoption in Iran's national EFL curriculum, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) remains inconsistently implemented, revealing a profound disconnect between policy mandates and classroom realities. This mixed-methods study examines the perceptions of 35 Iranian EFL teachers (15 pre-service, 20 in-service) in Isfahan, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, to explore their conceptualizations of CLT, perceived barriers to its enactment, and the resulting belief-practice gap. Findings demonstrate robust theoretical support for CLT principles across both cohorts, yet their practical application is severely constrained. Common obstacles include grammar-focused national examinations, large class sizes, students' ingrained passive learning habits, scarcity of authentic materials, and insufficient teacher training. In-service teachers further highlight systemic barriers—misaligned assessment systems, inadequate administrative support, and low salaries—whereas pre-service teachers, limited by minimal classroom exposure, display greater optimism. Framed through Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the study positions teachers as active agents mediating conflicting institutional and cultural demands. It contends that sustainable CLT integration demands policy coherence, sustained professional development, and context-sensitive adaptations rather than relying solely on top-down reform. By providing a comparative analysis across career stages, this research advances teacher cognition scholarship and reframes CLT as a locally negotiated practice, offering direct implications for teacher education, curriculum design, and policymaking in comparable EFL contexts.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, EFL teachers, teacher cognition, implementation barriers, sociocultural theory

Resumen

A pesar de su adopción oficial en el currículo nacional de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en Irán, la Enseñanza de Lenguas Comunicativa (CLT) continúa implementándose de manera inconsistente, lo que revela una profunda desconexión entre las directrices políticas y las realidades del aula. Este estudio de métodos mixtos examina las percepciones de 35 docentes iraníes de EFL (15 en formación y 20 en ejercicio) en Isfahán, mediante cuestionarios y entrevistas semiestructuradas, con el fin de explorar sus conceptualizaciones de la CLT, los obstáculos percibidos para su aplicación y la brecha resultante entre creencias y práctica. Los hallazgos muestran un sólido respaldo teórico a los principios de la CLT en ambos grupos; sin embargo, su aplicación práctica se ve gravemente limitada. Entre los obstáculos comunes se incluyen los exámenes nacionales centrados en la gramática, los grupos numerosos, los hábitos arraigados de aprendizaje pasivo en los estudiantes, la escasez de materiales auténticos y la insuficiente formación docente. Los docentes en ejercicio destacan además barreras sistémicas —desajustes en los sistemas de evaluación, apoyo administrativo insuficiente y salarios bajos— mientras que los docentes en formación, con una experiencia mínima en el aula, manifiestan mayor optimismo. Desde el marco de la teoría sociocultural de Vygotsky, el estudio posiciona a los docentes como agentes activos que median entre demandas institucionales y culturales en conflicto. Se sostiene que una integración sostenible de la CLT exige coherencia en las políticas, desarrollo profesional continuo y adaptaciones sensibles al contexto, más allá de las

reformas impuestas desde arriba. Al ofrecer un análisis comparativo según la etapa profesional, esta investigación aporta a la literatura sobre cognición docente y replantea la CLT como una práctica negociada localmente, con implicaciones directas para la formación docente, el diseño curricular y la formulación de políticas en contextos de EFL similares.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Lenguas Comunicativa, docentes de EFL, cognición docente, barreras de implementación, teoría sociocultural

Resumo

Apesar de sua adoção oficial no currículo nacional de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) no Irã, o Ensino Comunicativo de Línguas (CLT) continua sendo implementado de forma inconsistente, revelando uma profunda desconexão entre as diretrizes políticas e as realidades da sala de aula. Este estudo de métodos mistos examina as percepções de 35 professores iranianos de EFL (15 em formação e 20 em exercício) em Isfahan, por meio de questionários e entrevistas semiestruturadas, com o objetivo de explorar suas concepções sobre a CLT, os obstáculos percebidos para sua aplicação e a consequente lacuna entre crenças e prática. Os resultados mostram um sólido respaldo teórico aos princípios da CLT em ambos os grupos; contudo, sua implementação prática é severamente limitada. Entre os obstáculos comuns estão os exames nacionais centrados na gramática, as turmas numerosas, os hábitos profundamente enraizados de aprendizagem passiva entre os estudantes, a escassez de materiais autênticos e a formação docente insuficiente. Os professores em exercício também destacam barreiras sistêmicas — desalinhamentos nos sistemas de avaliação, apoio administrativo inadequado e salários baixos — enquanto os professores em formação, com experiência mínima em sala de aula, demonstram maior otimismo. À luz da teoria sociocultural de Vygotsky, o estudo posiciona os docentes como agentes ativos que mediam demandas institucionais e culturais conflitantes. Argumenta-se que uma integração sustentável da CLT exige coerência política, desenvolvimento profissional contínuo e adaptações sensíveis ao contexto, indo além de reformas impostas de cima para baixo. Ao oferecer uma análise comparativa entre diferentes etapas da carreira docente, esta pesquisa contribui para a literatura sobre cognição docente e reconcebe a CLT como uma prática negociada localmente, com implicações diretas para a formação de professores, o desenho curricular e a formulação de políticas em contextos de EFL semelhantes.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Comunicativo de Línguas, professores de EFL, cognição docente, barreiras de implementação, teoria sociocultural

Introduction

Over the past four decades, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has established itself as the dominant paradigm in second and foreign language education (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Anchored in functional linguistics and sociocultural theory, CLT foregrounds the development of communicative competence, meaningful interaction, and learner autonomy rather than mere grammatical accuracy (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), aligning with contemporary understandings of language as a dynamic, socially situated practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Yet, when transferred to non-Western contexts, CLT frequently encounters significant resistance, producing a marked disjuncture between policy prescriptions and classroom enactment (Holliday, 1994). This tension is particularly acute in Iran, where, despite curricular reforms explicitly promoting communicative competence, teacher-centered, grammar-focused instruction continues to prevail (Sheikhol-Eslami & Allami, 2012).

The present study addresses a large gap in the literature: the absence of theoretically informed, comparative research examining how pre- and in-service Iranian EFL teachers conceptualize CLT and negotiate its implementation within a constraining socio-educational landscape. Although logistical barriers such as resource scarcity and large classes are well documented, deeper institutional, ideological, and cognitive influences on teachers' decision-making remain underexplored (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013). Moreover, CLT is often treated as a monolithic construct, obscuring the adaptive strategies teachers employ in response to local realities.

Drawing on data from 35 Iranian EFL teachers (15 pre-service, 20 in-service) in Isfahan, this investigation contends that the limited uptake of CLT in Iran arises not merely from technical shortcomings but from systemic misalignment among teacher education, assessment regimes, pedagogical goals, and entrenched sociocultural expectations. To interrogate this claim, the study pursues three interrelated questions: (1) How do Iranian EFL teachers conceptualize CLT? (2) What obstacles do they identify in implementing it? (3) How do their perceptions illuminate broader conflicts between global pedagogical trends and local educational realities?

Existing Iranian research has relied predominantly on quantitative surveys that offer limited insight into underlying motivations (e.g., Kalanzadeh et al., 2013), focused exclusively on in-service teachers while neglecting the formative pre-service stage, or failed to incorporate teachers' own voices through in-depth interviewing. By contrast, the current study integrates questionnaire and interview data across career stages, providing a richer, more nuanced account of the compromises and contradictions that characterize CLT reform in constrained educational environments.

Literature Review

Emerging in the 1970s as a corrective to structuralist methods that privileged form over function (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) redefined language proficiency as communicative competence encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions (Canale & Swain, 1980). This shift positioned learners as active meaning-makers in authentic interaction. However, as CLT gained global currency, its assumed universality came under sustained critique. Holliday (1994) argued that Western-derived models frequently clash with non-Western institutional cultures and power structures, while Kumaravadivelu (2003) called for a post-method era in which pedagogy is locally constructed rather than imported wholesale. These perspectives collectively reveal CLT not as a neutral methodology but as a culturally embedded practice whose implementation is inevitably mediated by local ideologies and histories.

Cross-cultural studies consistently document a pronounced gap between CLT policy and classroom reality. Teachers in East Asia (Penner, 1995) report that learner autonomy and open interaction conflict with cultural norms of teacher authority, examination pressure, and resource constraints. Although learner receptivity can sometimes be favorable (Rao, 2002) and targeted training may shift beliefs (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000), sustained adoption typically requires aligned assessment (Brookhart, 2013), cultural adaptation (Sifakis, 2019), and ongoing professional support. These findings underscore that ideological alignment alone is insufficient; structural and cultural conditions must also be addressed.

Iranian research mirrors global patterns while revealing context-specific nuances. Teachers express theoretical support for communicative principles yet cite intractable barriers such as grammar-dominated examinations, overcrowded classrooms, scarce authentic materials, and inadequate training (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013; Lestari & Margana, 2024). Implementation varies significantly with self-efficacy (Sheikhol-Eslami & Allami, 2012), administrative support, remuneration, and school type (Jamalzadeh & Shahsavar, 2015; Iskandar & Priyana, 2024). Notably, even teachers with strong CLT knowledge enact only limited aspects that align with institutional constraints (Mangubhai et al., 2005), whereas collaborative professional learning communities demonstrate greater success in sustaining innovation (Sifakis, 2019). Such evidence aligns with sociocultural theory, emphasizing teacher learning as a socially mediated process within communities of practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998).

Teacher cognition is widely recognized as the primary filter through which methodological innovations are interpreted and enacted (Pajares, 1992). Pre-service teachers typically enter training with entrenched grammar-oriented beliefs that gradually moderate through experience, social interaction, and professional development (Burnaby & Sun, 1989). Longitudinal research reveals that initial CLT

idealism often yields to pragmatic adaptation as novices confront systemic realities (Breen et al., 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2022), with peer collaboration and reflective practice proving critical to sustaining innovative dispositions (Korthagen, 2010). These developmental trajectories highlight the mediated, socially situated nature of belief change.

Despite considerable scholarship, Iranian CLT research remains constrained by reliance on quantitative surveys of in-service teachers alone, monolithic conceptualizations of CLT, and limited methodological triangulation (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013; Mangubhai et al., 2005). Few studies compare pre- and in-service perspectives or foreground teachers' own narratives. The current investigation addresses these limitations by integrating questionnaire and interview data across career stages, adopting a sociocultural lens to illuminate CLT as a dynamic, contested, and locally negotiated practice rather than a fixed import.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopts a qualitative interpretivist design to capture the nuanced, contextually embedded nature of teacher cognition regarding Communicative Language Teaching (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Grounded in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the notion of teacher agency within constrained environments (Holliday, 1994), the design prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalizability. Such an approach is particularly suited to the research questions, which demand exploration of teachers' conceptualizations of CLT, perceived implementation barriers, and the broader tensions between global pedagogical ideals and local realities—issues that require narrative richness and interpretive sensitivity rather than mere quantification.

Participants and sampling

Thirty-five Iranian EFL teachers in Isfahan were purposively sampled to maximize variation in age, gender, experience, and career stage (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The sample comprised 15 pre-service teachers (10 female, 5 male; aged 21–29, M = 24.3) in their final year of BA study at a teacher education center, with exposure limited to coursework and a brief practicum, and 20 in-service high-school teachers (12 female, 8 male) possessing 3–15 years of experience. All participants were native Persian speakers holding at least a BA in English or equivalent certification. This comparative design enabled examination of belief evolution from initial training to sustained professional practice (Breen et al., 2001). The urban Isfahan setting, while limiting generalizability, reflects typical constraints of public-sector Iranian EFL education.

Researcher positionality as an insider Iranian EFL educator was addressed through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing.

Data collection instruments and procedures

Data were gathered through a two-part questionnaire followed by individual semi-structured interviews, affording triangulation within a predominantly qualitative framework (Denzin, 1978). The questionnaire collected demographic information and 22 Likert-scale and open-ended items adapted from established instruments (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013; Mangubhai et al., 2005) to assess familiarity with CLT, conceptual understanding, and perceived obstacles. Example items include "Lack of teacher training is a major impediment to CLT implementation" and "Students' passive learning styles impede communicative activities."

Interviews (20–40 minutes), conducted two weeks after questionnaire completion to allow reflection, were audio-recorded with consent and conducted in Persian or English, according to participant preference. A core protocol addressed five key areas, including the influences of teacher education/experience, personal definitions of CLT, barriers to communicative activities, examination impact, and student responses to interaction, with flexible probing for depth. Member checking was offered for clarification.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model, supported by NVivo 12. Transcripts and open-ended responses were repeatedly read for familiarization, then inductively coded (e.g., "exam pressure," "resource scarcity"). Codes were collated into candidate themes (student factors, institutional constraints, teacher beliefs) and refined through constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Final themes were reviewed against the full dataset, named descriptively, and illustrated with representative verbatim excerpts. An inter-coder agreement of 85% was achieved on 20% of the data through independent peer coding.

Ethical considerations and trustworthiness

Institutional ethical approval was secured, informed consent obtained, and participant anonymity protected through the use of pseudonyms and encrypted data storage. Participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage. Trustworthiness was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria: credibility through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement; transferability through thick contextual description; dependability through audit trails; and confirmability through reflexive practice and peer debriefing.

Results

The following section presents the empirical findings derived from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with 35 Iranian EFL teachers (15 pre-service, 20 in-service). Data were organized thematically to illuminate teachers' conceptual understanding of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the barriers they perceive to its implementation, qualitative elaborations of those barriers, and the critical divergences between pre- and in-service perspectives. Quantitative results were reported as percentages of participants rating each item as "significant" or "very significant" on a 5-point Likert scale; chi-square tests assessed group differences. Qualitative data were illustrated with representative verbatim excerpts while preserving the full range of expressed views.

Conceptual understanding of CLT

Both pre- and in-service teachers demonstrated general familiarity with Communicative Language Teaching, yet the depth and precision of their conceptualizations varied markedly. Pre-service teachers consistently framed CLT as a student-centered approach that prioritizes interaction and real-life communication over rote memorization of grammar. One participant articulated this view succinctly: "CLT means prioritizing students' communication in real-life situations rather than just memorizing grammar rules" (P#7), while another emphasized the development of oral/aural skills over exclusive focus on reading and writing (P#12).

In-service teachers offered more elaborate definitions that frequently incorporated specific techniques, describing CLT as a methodology grounded in cooperative learning, role-plays, and authentic communicative tasks (I#9). Nevertheless, misconceptions persisted: several respondents erroneously equated CLT with the complete abandonment of grammar instruction or conflated it with any contemporary teaching trend, revealing substantive gaps in theoretical grounding. Quantitatively, a strong consensus emerged on CLT's core strengths, with 87% of pre-service and 84% of in-service teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that it fosters learner autonomy and meaningful interaction. However, only 49% of pre-service and 54% of in-service teachers reported confidence in distinguishing CLT from other methodological approaches, underscoring that broad approval coexists with conceptual imprecision.

Perceived barriers to CLT implementation

When presented with 22 potential barriers rated on a 5-point Likert scale, both cohorts identified a strikingly similar hierarchy of constraints (Tables 1 and 2), with lack of teacher training, large classes, grammar-based examinations, and students' passive learning styles emerging as the most salient obstacles.

Table 1. Difficulties of adopting CLT from pre-service teachers' viewpoints (Percentage of participants rating the item as significant or very significant)

1	Lack of teacher training	87%
2	Large classes	74%
3	Grammar-based examination	71%
4	Students' passive learning style	70%
5	Students' lack of motivation to communicate	68%
6	Teachers' lack of socio-linguistic knowledge	62%
7	Lack of authentic material	61%
8	New roles of teachers and learners	54%
9	Teachers' lack of motivation due to their low income	43%
10	Teachers' poor English proficiency	41%
11	Difficulties in testing communicative ability	31%
12	Lack of funding, learning resources, and facilities	30%
13	Limited authentic social environment outside class	28%
14	Different levels of students' English proficiency	27%
15	Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments	26%
16	Lack of training in CLT	57%
17	Students' low-level English proficiency	57%
18	Lack of support from the administration	38%
19	Differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts	72%
20	Teachers' lack of target culture (English) knowledge	31%
21	Teachers' lack of sufficient spoken English competence	41%
22	Teachers' misconceptions of CLT	45%

As shown in Table 1, pre-service teachers overwhelmingly prioritized deficiencies in their own preparation and immediate classroom conditions—lack of teacher training (87%), overcrowded classes (74%), grammar-oriented national examinations (71%), and students' ingrained passive habits (70%)—while assigning considerably lower weight to deeper systemic and socioeconomic issues such as low income (43%), lack of administrative support (38%), and inadequate communicative assessment tools (26%). This pattern reflects their still-limited exposure to the full institutional and material realities of the teaching profession.

Although the overall ranking of barriers shows strong continuity between the two groups, in-service teachers—as illustrated in Table 2—displayed a marked escalation in the perceived severity of institutional, socioeconomic, and contextual constraints, which becomes fully apparent only after sustained professional experience.

Table 2. Difficulties of adopting CLT from the in-service teachers' viewpoints (Percentage of participants rating the item as significant or very significant)

1	Lack of teacher training	84%
2	Large classes	78%
3	Grammar-based examination	73%
4	Students' passive learning style	72%
5	Students' lack of motivation to communicate	70%
6	Teachers' lack of socio-linguistic knowledge	67%
7	Lack of authentic material	64%
8	New roles of teachers and learners	51%
9	Teachers' lack of motivation due to their low income	67%
10	Teachers' poor English proficiency	54%
11	Difficulties in testing communicative ability	51%
12	Lack of funding, learning resources, and facilities	35%
13	Limited authentic social environment outside class	61%
14	Different levels of students' English proficiency	32%
15	Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments	64%
16	Lack of training in CLT	59%
17	Students' low-level English proficiency	63%
18	Lack of support from the administration	58%
19	Differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts	83%
20	Teachers' lack of target culture (English) knowledge	58%
21	Teachers' lack of sufficient spoken English competence	58%
22	Teachers' misconceptions of CLT	49%

Although a chi-square analysis revealed no statistically significant overall difference between the two cohorts ($\chi^2 = 16.000$, df = 20, p = .453), Table 2 demonstrates that in-service teachers ascribed dramatically greater weight to systemic and socioeconomic

barriers than their pre-service counterparts did. The EFL–ESL contextual divide (83% vs. 72%), demotivation due to low income (67% vs. 43%), the absence of effective communicative assessment instruments (64% vs. 26%), and the lack of administrative support (58% vs. 38%) all increased in perceived severity. This marked escalation unequivocally confirms that prolonged immersion in the institutional environment heightens teachers' awareness of the structural forces that most powerfully obstruct CLT enactment.

Qualitative insights from interviews

Assessment and curriculum misalignment

The disconnect between communicative pedagogy and grammar-focused national examinations emerged as the dominant theme among in-service teachers. One veteran educator captured the dilemma bluntly: "We teach speaking, but the exam has no speaking section—so students ask, 'Why waste time?'" (I#3). Another described allocating disproportionate class time to grammar drills and test-taking strategies while marginalizing speaking and writing practice (I#14). Pre-service teachers acknowledged the same structural reality but expressed optimism that future curricular shifts would resolve it. "I believed CLT would work—until my first class of 45 silent students" (P#5).

Classroom management and structural limitations

Large class sizes were repeatedly cited as rendering genuine interaction logistically impossible. In-service teachers described the practical impossibility of monitoring pair work, ensuring equitable participation, or providing individualized feedback in classes of 40–50 students (I#6, I#11). Pre-service teachers, constrained by limited practicum experience, tended to underestimate this barrier.

Teacher motivation and professional identity

A striking finding unique to in-service teachers was the explicit link between pedagogical conservatism and economic disenfranchisement. One participant declared, "They pay us like clerks but expect us to be innovators" (I#8), directly connecting low salary and institutional disrespect to diminished willingness to invest in innovative practice.

Training and professional development

Both cohorts criticized the theoretical bias of pre-service preparation and the absence of credible in-service opportunities. Pre-service teachers reported learning CLT principles in the abstract without guided classroom application (P#5), while in-service teachers questioned the legitimacy of available online modules and noted widespread attendance substitution (I#17).

Student-related factors

Students' entrenched passivity—characterized as habitual silence, note-taking, and memorization—was described as a formidable cultural obstacle. When prompted to speak, students "just stare" (P#14), reinforcing teacher reluctance to invest effort in interactive tasks that yield minimal immediate participation. Pre-service teachers predicted similar challenges yet articulated their intention to gradually alter student behavior through encouragement and interactive tasks.

Comparative analysis: Pre-service versus in-service perspectives

Despite quantitative convergence on major barriers, qualitative data revealed profound interpretive divergence. Pre-service teachers framed obstacles as surmountable challenges and expressed reformist optimism, whereas in-service teachers adopted a resigned, context-bound stance shaped by cumulative exposure to systemic inertia. The EFL–ESL distinction, cited by 83% of in-service but only 72% of pre-service teachers, exemplifies this shift: novices viewed the absence of an English-speaking environment as a difficulty to overcome; veterans treated it as a fundamental justification for methodological adaptation or restraint.

These results unequivocally establish that Iranian EFL teachers enthusiastically embrace CLT in principle yet confront an array of structural, institutional, and socioeconomic impediments that severely curtail its enactment—impediments whose full weight becomes apparent only through sustained professional experience. This foundation sets the stage for a sociocultural reinterpretation of the observed disjuncture between belief and practice.

Discussion

The following section interprets the findings within a sociocultural framework, arguing that the persistent belief-practice gap observed among Iranian EFL teachers does not stem from individual resistance or inadequate understanding but from a complex interplay of structural, institutional, and socioeconomic constraints that systematically undermine the enactment of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). By juxtaposing the theoretical endorsement expressed by both pre- and in-service teachers with the formidable barriers they encounter, the discussion demonstrates that CLT's limited classroom realization in Iran represents a predictable outcome of systemic misalignment rather than a failure of teacher will or competence. This analysis extends existing teacher cognition scholarship, challenges universalist assumptions about CLT, and offers concrete implications for policy and practice.

The findings unequivocally confirm a persistent disjuncture between teachers' espoused support for CLT and its limited classroom enactment—a pattern that cannot be dismissed as mere cognitive dissonance but must be understood as contextually

mediated pragmatism (Breen et al., 2001; Borg, 2003). Grammar-dominated high-stakes examinations emerged as the most powerful constraint (73% of in-service teachers), corroborating extensive evidence of negative washback (Sun, 2021; Ellis, 2022) and demonstrating that even high self-efficacy teachers revert to traditional methods under institutional pressure (Sheikhol-Eslami & Allami, 2012). Crucially, professional experience intensifies this gap: pre-service teachers exhibit idealism untested by reality, whereas in-service teachers adopt a resigned pragmatism shaped by years of systemic obstacles. This trajectory aligns with longitudinal studies of teacher cognition (Cochran-Smith, 2022; Korthagen, 2010) and underscores that belief-practice congruence requires far more than ideological alignment; it demands structural reform.

Beyond familiar logistical barriers (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013), the present study exposes a deeper socioeconomic dimension largely overlooked in prior Iranian research: teacher demotivation stemming from inadequate compensation and systemic devaluation. In-service teachers explicitly linked low salaries to diminished willingness to innovate ("Why risk new methods when we're not even respected?" P#8), revealing pedagogical reform as inseparable from labor conditions in resource-constrained contexts (cf. Humphries & Burns, 2015; Norouzpour & Pourmohammadi, 2021). Coupled with pervasive absence of administrative support (58%) and misaligned assessment tools (64%), these findings indicate top-down policy implementation that ignores the material realities of teachers' professional lives (Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Guskey, 2022).

The widespread assertion—particularly among in-service teachers (83%)—that CLT is less applicable in EFL settings does not reflect outright rejection but a form of contextual theorizing (Holliday, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Far from invoking the EFL-ESL divide as an excuse, teachers are engaging in a culturally grounded reinterpretation, selectively integrating communicative elements that align with local norms of authority and examination demands. This adaptive stance aligns with emerging advocacy for culturally sustaining pedagogies that honor local epistemologies while pursuing communicative goals (Sifakis, 2019).

An overwhelming majority (87% pre-service, 84% in-service) identified inadequate training as a primary barrier, exposing a critical weakness in Iranian teacher education. Pre-service programs remain largely theoretical, offering minimal practical application (Silva, 2005), while in-service teachers lack access to systematic, credible professional development. Evidence from more supportive contexts demonstrates that experiential, collaborative training can shift both beliefs and practices (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Le & Pham, 2021), yet Iranian teachers operate without such scaffolding, further constricting their zone of proximal development for innovation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Viewed through a Vygotskian lens, restricted CLT enactment emerges not as an individual failing but as the predictable outcome of a professional ecosystem lacking

essential mediational tools—aligned assessment, continuous training, administrative support, and economic recognition (Johnson, 2006). Teachers are active agents, yet their agency is severely circumscribed by structural contradictions that render genuine innovation unsustainable without concomitant policy reform.

The evidence compels a decisive shift from treating CLT as a universal methodology toward a flexible, locally negotiated practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Sifakis, 2019). Successful integration in Iran requires (a) assessment reform that values communicative competence, (b) sustained, practice-oriented professional development embedded in communities of practice, (c) improved material conditions and administrative support for teachers, and (d) explicit endorsement of principled eclecticism that blends communicative principles with culturally congruent methods. Only through such systemic coherence can CLT move beyond rhetorical adoption to meaningful classroom transformation.

Conclusion

This study confirms that Iranian EFL teachers, across pre- and in-service stages, overwhelmingly endorse the theoretical principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Yet their classroom practices remain heavily constrained by interlocking systemic barriers: grammar-dominated national examinations, overcrowded classes, inadequate training, entrenched student passivity, and—most acutely for in-service teachers—low salaries, absent administrative support, and misaligned assessment systems. These constraints do not reflect teacher resistance but rather a pragmatic adaptation that intensifies with professional experience, transforming initial idealism into negotiated compromise.

Framed through a Vygotskian sociocultural lens (Vygotsky, 1978), the findings extend teacher cognition research by demonstrating that belief-practice congruence is mediated not only by social interaction and professional learning but also by material and institutional conditions often sidelined in mainstream theory. The evidence decisively challenges the universalist pretensions of CLT, reinforcing post-method (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and culturally sustaining perspectives (Sifakis, 2019) that position teachers as legitimate co-constructors of locally viable pedagogies rather than passive implementers of imported models.

Theoretically grounded reform must begin in teacher-education programs, which currently prioritize abstract knowledge over sustained, contextualized practice. Curricula need systematic integration of authentic CLT application, supervised practicum, and reflective cycles that prepare novices for real-world constraints (Cochran-Smith, 2022).

Most importantly, policymakers must recognize teacher welfare as a non-negotiable prerequisite for pedagogical change. Competitive salaries, professional recognition, and robust administrative support are not ancillary rewards but essential conditions that sustain the motivation and agency required for innovation (Hattie, 2024; Timperley, 2024). Finally, ongoing professional development should abandon isolated workshops in favor of sustained, school-based communities of practice where teachers collaboratively adapt communicative principles to local realities.

The study is limited by its modest sample (N = 35) drawn exclusively from urban Isfahan, restricting transferability to rural or private-sector contexts. Reliance on self-reported data alone may inflate the reported belief-practice gap. Finally, the cross-sectional design captures only a snapshot of cognition rather than its longitudinal evolution.

Future investigations should employ longitudinal designs to trace belief-practice trajectories from pre-service training through the first decade of teaching. Multi-site studies incorporating rural and private institutions would enhance generalizability. Direct classroom observation and stimulated recall protocols could triangulate with self-reports, while intervention studies testing context-adapted CLT models within reformed assessment and professional development frameworks would provide actionable evidence for policy transformation.

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Ready or Not? Preparedness of Pre-service EFL Teachers to Inclusive Education: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China

¿Listos o no? Preparación de los docentes de inglés en formación para la educación inclusiva: un estudio comparativo transcultural en Turquía, Kazajistán y China.

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Abstract

This study tried to investigate pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' preparedness for inclusive education from a cross-cultural perspective. We used a quantitative survey design and collected the data in a cross-sectional way from three Asian countries: Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China. We implemented a questionnaire measuring knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers regarding inclusive education to 694 pre-service EFL teachers. We utilized the Kruskal Wallis test and Tamhane›s T2 test to analyze the quantitative data of the groups in a comparative way. We found cross-cultural differences among the countries concerning inclusive education. The perceptions subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in China. The attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of the pre-service EFL teachers in China, while the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in China. The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan, while the knowledge scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China are significantly higher than the scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan. Based on these results, we discussed the place of inclusive education in pre-service EFL education from a cross-cultural perspective.

Key Words: Cross-cultural, inclusive education, teacher education, EFL, pre-service teachers.

Resumen

Este estudio investigó, desde una perspectiva transcultural, el nivel de preparación de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en formación para la educación inclusiva. Se empleó un diseño cuantitativo de encuesta y se recopilaron datos transversales en Turquía, Kazajistán y China. Un total de 694 docentes en formación completaron un cuestionario que evaluó su conocimiento, actitudes y percepciones sobre la educación inclusiva. Para comparar los resultados entre los países, se aplicaron las pruebas Kruskal-Wallis y T2 de Tamhane.

Los hallazgos revelaron diferencias significativas entre los tres contextos. En Kazajistán, las puntuaciones de la subescala de percepciones fueron significativamente más altas que en China. En cuanto a las actitudes, los docentes en formación de Turquía y Kazajistán obtuvieron puntuaciones superiores a las de China. Respecto al conocimiento, Turquía presentó puntuaciones significativamente más altas que Kazajistán, mientras que China también superó a Kazajistán en esta subescala.

Estos resultados evidencian que la preparación para la educación inclusiva varía de manera notable entre los países analizados, lo que sugiere la necesidad de fortalecer la formación inicial de docentes de EFL considerando las particularidades culturales y pedagógicas de cada contexto. El estudio discute el rol y los desafíos de la educación inclusiva en la formación docente desde una perspectiva transcultural.

Resumo

Este estudo investigou, sob uma perspectiva transcultural, o nível de preparação de futuros professores de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) para a educação inclusiva. Utilizou-se um delineamento quantitativo de levantamento, com coleta de dados transversal na Turquia, no Cazaquistão e na China. Um total de 694 licenciandos respondeu a um questionário que avaliou seus conhecimentos, atitudes e percepções sobre educação inclusiva. Para comparar os resultados entre os países, aplicaram-se os testes Kruskal-Wallis e T2 de Tamhane.

Os resultados revelaram diferenças significativas entre os três contextos. No Cazaquistão, as pontuações da subescala de percepções foram significativamente mais altas do que na China. Em relação às atitudes, os futuros professores da Turquia e do Cazaquistão apresentaram pontuações superiores às da China. No que se refere ao conhecimento, a Turquia obteve pontuações significativamente mais altas do que o Cazaquistão, enquanto a China também superou o Cazaquistão nessa subescala.

Esses achados mostram que a preparação para a educação inclusiva varia consideravelmente entre os países analisados, indicando a necessidade de fortalecer a formação inicial de professores de EFL, levando em conta as especificidades culturais e pedagógicas de cada contexto. O estudo discute o papel e os desafios da educação inclusiva na formação docente sob uma perspectiva transcultural.

Palavras-chave: transculturalidade, educação inclusiva, formação de professores, EFL, licenciandos

Introduction

Globally, Learners with Special Needs Education (LSNE), that is, learners with hearing, intellectual, physical, and/or visual disabilities, autism, among others, are constantly faced with a series of challenges (Osisanya et al., 2015). However, several models have been suggested to ameliorate the practical challenges over the past three decades (Srivastava et al., 2017). Significantly, the Salamanca conference (UNESCO, 1994), which brought together various nations and international organizations, advocated for 'inclusive education'. The concept of 'inclusive education' is an educational approach that advances equity and social justice in all learners' teaching and learning activities, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities (Adigun, 2021). In other words, inclusive education seeks to establish equal and un-marginalized learning opportunities for all learners with or without special needs (SNE) under the same learning conditions. The Salamanca framework for action agreed upon by all signatories at the conference has been domesticated in several nations, including Australia, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Spain, and Türkiye, among others. The framework of action serves as a guiding principle through which neighborhood schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their emotional, intellectual, linguistic, physical, social, or other conditions. This further implies that inclusive education as an educational policy stipulates that LSNE should not only attend neighborhood schools but should be exposed to the same curriculum given to their counterparts without disabilities (Tuncay & Kizilaslan, 2021).

Interestingly, issues of community pluralism and globalization, in particular, have influenced teaching language(s) in various schools (Chumbow, 2009; May, 2008). Hence, all learners, regardless of disabilities, are said to be exposed to various language(s), especially the English Language. Lamentably, previous studies (Osisanya et al., 2015) have documented communication difficulties among LSNE. Thus, many such LSNE struggles with academic engagements with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. However, many such studies have suggested recurrent in-service training for EFL teachers of such learners. For instance, Ketrish et al. (2019) aver that the success of an inclusive education approach depends mainly on the training and re-training of in-service teachers for skill development and capacity building, a clear understanding of the pathological and psychological characteristics of LSNE as well deployment of appropriate pedagogical skill for effective instructional deliveries. On the contrary, until the present, there is a paucity of cross-cultural comparative research evidence that highlights the implication of preparedness among prospective EFL teachers for teaching within the inclusive educational setting. Thus there is limited understanding that could influence generalizable cross-cultural implications for policy and practice of inclusive education.

As indicated by Pokrivčáková (2018), teaching the English Language to LSNE within the inclusive classroom requires pedagogical skills that necessitate EFL teachers' attention, classroom awareness, and consciousness of the expressive language abilities of LSNE. Therefore, there is a need for prospective EFL teachers to develop appropriate organizational skills that could foster inclusion and academic cohesion and dislodge barriers to teaching and learning EFL. Unfortunately, the preparedness and readiness of EFL teachers for inclusive education remain a concern. This study investigates the knowledge, skills, and perceptions of prospective English teachers in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and China regarding inclusive education. The main reasons for selecting these three countries include the existence of different educational systems, the presence of different educational models for inclusive education, and the differences in the practices they use in English teaching. Therefore, this quantitative study aims to fill this gap by revealing findings regarding perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge in inclusive education from pre-service EFL teacher education contexts from three countries, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China, in a cross-cultural way. Based on this aim, we addressed the following research questions in our study: Is there a significant difference among pre-service EFL teachers' competency levels, perceptions, and attitudes regarding inclusive education?

Literature Review

From the early twenties to the present, findings from research studies undertaken in many parts of the world provide insights into teachers' perspectives and attitudes about inclusive education. Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions Regarding Inclusive Education, and Comparative Studies about EFL Inclusive Education are examined through research from different countries.

EFL education and Inclusive Education in Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China

Inclusive education is crucial in teaching English as a foreign language in Türkiye. Disadvantaged individuals, migrant and refugee children, and those who require special education due to socio-economic reasons can access foreign language education through inclusive education. In this context, these individuals can overcome language barriers and find opportunities to express themselves by learning English, the global language.

Considering Kazakhstan's multilingual and multicultural social structure, the role and importance of inclusive education in teaching English as a foreign language is critical. Since English is used in education and business alongside Kazakh and Russian

in the country, it is very important to educate individuals who need inclusive education in this context.

Given China's vast geographical structure, ethnic diversity, and global interaction, the role and importance of inclusive education in English teaching is considerable. Students living in rural areas, ethnic minority groups, and individuals requiring special education are unable to receive sufficient foreign language education, which weakens their integration into society. Inclusive education ensures social equality and supports individual development in this context.

Pre-service EFL Teachers' Opinions Regarding Inclusive Education

The role of inclusive education in English language teaching is considerable because English language teachers can identify what may cause students to have difficulty in learning English and how they solve these problems effectively (Smith, 2018). English teachers and prospective English teachers who possess theoretical and practical knowledge of inclusive education can restructure their English teaching processes to cater to students who require content tailored to inclusive education (Miller, 2016). Therefore, this study comparatively examines the competencies of prospective English teachers in three different countries regarding inclusive education.

There has been insufficient research on the competencies of English teachers in Türkiye regarding inclusive education. Regarding existing studies, research conducted by Aksu Ataç and Taşçı (2020) found that prospective English teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusive education in English teaching. According to another study, the new English language teacher education program (ELTEP) of Türkiye informs prospective English teachers about inclusive education through six courses (Yastıbaş, 2021). Making applied activities and inclusive education courses mandatory in undergraduate programs that train English teachers in Turkey is among the recommendations. The study found that teacher candidates' proficiency in inclusive education, legal regulations on inclusive education, and its history is at an intermediate level. Another important finding is that female participants have a higher level of awareness regarding inclusive education compared to male participants (Gülay & Altun, 2023).

In Kazakhstan, the inclusion of inclusive education in the education system does not have a long history (Mukhitova et al., 2024). A study examined the perspectives of Turkish and Kazakh English teacher candidates on inclusive education (Zhalelkanova, 2019). This study found a slight difference between Turkish and Kazakh English teacher candidates. Kazakh English teacher candidates' perspectives on inclusive education were more positive than those of Turkish English teacher candidates. Participants

were found to have confidence in themselves and their creativity in inclusive education practices (Zhalelkanova, 2019).

Another study measured the awareness levels of prospective English teachers in Kazakhstan regarding inclusive education. The study concluded that the 80 prospective English teachers involved had a very high level of awareness about the basic content, objectives, and importance of inclusive education (Mukhitova et al., 2024). According to another study, older and more experienced English teachers exhibit more positive attitudes than English teacher candidates (Polat et al., 2023).

No research has been found on the role of inclusive education in the training of English teacher candidates in China. However, there is no study investigating the current situation of inclusive education in pre-service EFL teacher education cross-culturally. Additionally, there is no study presenting findings from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China in a cross-cultural comparative way. Accordingly, this study attempts to fill this gap by presenting findings regarding perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge in inclusive education from pre-service EFL teacher education contexts from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China in a cross-cultural comparative way.

Methodology

Research Design

We used a quantitative survey design throughout the study. In survey design, researchers administer a survey or questionnaire to a small number of people to reveal directions in perspectives, opinions, or features of a population (Creswell, 2012). We adopted a cross-cultural design and collected the data cross-sectional from Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China to accomplish the research. Cross-cultural refers to systematic comparisons that directly address questions regarding the influence of cultural variations (Ember & Ember, 2009). In cross-sectional research studies, data are gathered at one point in time from a specific sample (Scott & Morrison, 2005).

Participants

Given the importance of teaching foreign languages in the framework of inclusive education, this study is noteworthy because it examines the attitudes, knowledge, and abilities of English teacher candidates in China, Kazakhstan, and Turkey regarding inclusive education. It is essential that all students receive equal instruction in English since it is a language that is widely used for communication, education, and employment. However, learning a second language necessitates greater assistance

for underprivileged populations, linguistic and cultural minorities, and people with special needs. Thus, in order to design effective teaching strategies that consider the disparities among pupils, English teacher candidates' abilities toward inclusive education are crucial. Additionally, the readiness of teacher candidates in this area determines the provision of inclusive and high-quality language instruction, as English language instruction is one of the priority areas of education policies in these three nations. The participants in the study were selected using a purposive sampling method. Incomplete and incorrectly filled-out responses were excluded from the study during data collection. Pre-service EFL teachers from three countries (Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China) participated in the study (N=694). The following table (Table 1) describes the demographic profiles (gender, country, and university) of the participants:

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the participants

Variable		N	%
Gender	Female	592	85.3
	Male	102	14.7
Country	Türkiye	150	21.6
	Kazakhstan	194	28.0
	China	350	50.4
University	Xinyang University (China)	139	20.0
	Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (Kazakhstan)	111	16.0
	Henan University/Xinlian College (China)	96	13.8
	Aksaray University (Türkiye)	46	6.6
	Dulaty Univesity Taraz (Kazakhstan)	41	5.9
	Beijing Normal University (China)	36	5.2
	İnonu University (Türkiye)	31	4.5
	Amasya University (Türkiye)	26	3.7
	Other (49 universities from 3 different countries)	307	44.2

Instrument

We used the "Pre-service Teachers and Inclusive Education" questionnaire developed by Adigun (2021) for the data collection. The data collection tool employed in this study was a self-constructed questionnaire. The researcher established the content validity of the questionnaire by subjecting it to meticulous review by specialists in inclusive education, psychology, and social work. The questionnaire involves three subsections that measure pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding inclusive education. These sections comprise 4-point Likert-type items

ranging from *Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Agree=3, and Strongly Agree=4.* The "knowledge" subscale has 12 items, and examples of these items include: *'Students with special needs have the right to receive an education in mainstream classes', 'Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive program in regular classrooms',* and *'Students with special needs are academically better in inclusive classrooms'.* The "attitudes" subscale has seven items, and examples of these items include: *'Students with special needs must be integrated into the regular community', 'I cannot teach in a school practicing inclusion', and 'I will be more stressed if I have learners with disabilities in my class'.* Finally, the "perceptions" subscale has 13 items, and examples of these items include: *'I feel inclusion can work at all schools', 'Learners who require specialized academic support are demanding and require greater input', and 'I feel that inclusion increases teachers' workload'.*

The knowledge subscale scores range from 27 to 45, and high scores show that participants are highly knowledgeable regarding inclusive education. The attitudes subscale scores range from 10 to 24, and high scores show that participants have positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The perceptions subscale scores range from 26 to 43, and high scores show that participants discern inclusive education as essential and beneficial. Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated as α=0.73 for the knowledge subscale, α=0.81 for the attitude's subscale, and α=0.79 for the perceptions subscale in the original study (Adigun, 2021). These values proved that the instrument was statistically reliable as its Cronbach's alpha consistency values were higher than α=0.5 (Bowling, 2014). The language of the questionnaire is English. It should be noted that the participants did not encounter any difficulties in completing the questionnaire, as they were English teacher candidates. The participants' language level is assumed to be B2-C1.

Data Analysis

We initially looked at the Skewness and Kurtosis values of the data to decide on the statistics to answer the study's research questions. Accordingly, we found Skewness and Kurtosis values as .096-4.689 regarding "Perception about Inclusive Education", .270-2.443 regarding "Attitudes towards Inclusive Education", and -1.054-8.722 regarding "Knowledge about Inclusive Education". We used non-parametric tests in the analyses since these values do not meet the standard distribution assumptions. We utilized the Kruskal Wallis test to determine whether scores on the scale differ across cultures, and we performed Tamhane's T2 test, one of the Post-Hoc tests, to reveal from which group the difference emerged (Pallant, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). A difference interval of 3/4=0.75 was taken as the scales used in the research had four options and three different intervals based on a 4-point Likert interval in the evaluations made according to arithmetic means. Accordingly, the different intervals in the evaluations in line with the arithmetic means are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Difference Intervals in the Evaluation of Scales

Difference Interval	Equivalence in the Survey
1.00 -1.75	Strongly Disagree
1.76 -2.50	Disagree
2.51- 3.25	Agree
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree

According to Table 2, the arithmetic averages between 1.00 and 1.75 intervals correspond to *"Strongly Disagree"*; the arithmetic averages between 1.76 and 2.50 intervals correspond to *"Disagree"*, the arithmetic averages between 2.51 and 3.25 correspond to *"Agree"*, and the arithmetic averages between 3.26 and 4.00 correspond to *"Strongly Agree"*.

Findings

The following table (Table 3) presents the pre-service EFL teachers' averages (knowledge, attitude, and perceptions) regarding their thoughts about inclusive education from an intercultural perspective.

Table 3. The pre-service EFL teachers' thoughts about inclusive education

	N		S.d.	Correspondence
Perception about inclusive education	694	2.60	.29	Agree
Attitudes towards inclusive education	694	2.48	.36	Disagree
Knowledge about inclusive education	694	2.79	.29	Agree

According to Table 3, the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of inclusive education on the scale are at the "Agree" level ($\bar{x}$=2.60 ± .29). However, it is seen that their attitudes towards inclusive education on the scale are at the "Disagree" level ($\bar{x}$=2.48 ± .36), and their knowledge levels on the scale are at the "Agree" level ($\bar{x}$=2.79 ± .29).

Table 4 shows the differences in the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers from the inclusive education questionnaire with regard to the cultures (Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China).

Table 4. Cross-cultural findings about inclusive education

Variable	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test			
Perception	(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank	p
	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	-.54873	.423	Türkiye	150	352.83	.028
		China	.36190	.673	Kazakhstan	194	376.46	
	Kazakhstan	Türkiye	.54873	.423	China	350	329.16	
		China	.91063*	.022				
	China	Türkiye	-.36190	.673				
		Kazakhstan	-.91063*	.022				
Attitudes	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test			
	(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank	p
	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	.03457	.999	Türkiye	150	405.33	<.001
		China	1.23333*	.000	Kazakhstan	194	398.97	
	Kazakhstan	Türkiye	-.03457	.999	China	350	294.19	
		China	1.19876*	.000				
	China	Türkiye	-1.23333*	.000				
		Kazakhstan	-1.19876*	.000				
Knowledge	Post-Hoc/Tamhane's T2 Test				Kruskal Wallis Test			
	(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference	p	Country	N	Mean Rank	p
	Türkiye	Kazakhstan	1.23285*	.001	Türkiye	150	372.31	.001
		China	.41524	.416	Kazakhstan	194	302.43	
	Kazakhstan	Türkiye	-1.23285*	.001	China	350	361.85	
		China	-.81761*	.030				
	China	Türkiye	-.41524	.416				
		Kazakhstan	.81761*	.030				

** The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

Firstly, Table 4 shows that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the perception subscale dimension differ significantly by culture (p=0.028*, Kruskal Wallis test). This result stems from the difference between the scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan and China. Accordingly, the scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the perception subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China (p=0.022*, Tamhane's T2 test).

Secondly, Table 4 indicates that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the attitude subscale dimension differ significantly according to the cultures (p=0.001*, Kruskal Wallis test). The attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China, and the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan are significantly higher than the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China (p=0.00*; p=0.00* Tamhane's T2 test). There is no significant difference in the attitude subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye and Kazakhstan (p=0.99>0.05 on Tamhane's T2 test).

Lastly, Table 4 reports that the pre-service EFL teachers' scores in the knowledge subscale dimension differ significantly according to the cultures (p=0.001*, Kruskal Wallis test). The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan (p=0.01*; Tamhane's T2 test). The knowledge subscale scores of pre-service EFL teachers in China are significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan (p=0.03*; Tamhane's T2 test). However, there is no significant difference between the knowledge subscale scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye and China (p=0.41>0.05 on Tamhane's T2 test).

Discussion

Developing educational policies, practices, and outcomes for students who need special education continues to be a vital agenda in Türkiye, Kazakhstan, and China, like in other developed and developing countries. Thus, inclusive education is a dynamic process continuously evolving due to cultural and contextual impacts. There is no doubt that teachers have a significant role in the practical application of inclusive education, meeting the learning needs of students with special needs, developing and enriching the course content for their interests, and getting the expected outcomes from the curriculum to be applied. Various research studies indicated teachers' role in inclusive education (De Boera et al., 2011). As the future's teachers, pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge about inclusive education have great importance in carrying out effective and quality inclusive education. Thus, pre-service EFL teachers will teach students with special educational needs in their professional life.

The results of the present research indicated significant differences among the participants from different countries in terms of attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge towards inclusive education. Participants' perception levels differentiate from each other according to the statistical analysis. Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers' perception level was significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers'

(p=0.022*, Tamhane's T2 test). The results can be interpreted as that the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary regulations about inclusive education in the "State Program of Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020" and the Chinese Government has published an important document, as "Special Education Improvement Plan" for 2014-2016 years (Fu et al., 2019). In this respect, it can be said that the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary legislation about inclusive education before the Chinese Government. As the legislation is passed, teacher trainers may become more conscious of the issue. On the other hand, there is only one course related to inclusive education at the university level in Kazakhstan and China, and pre-service EFL teachers are enrolled. In this perspective, formal education at the university level provides nearly equal information about the issue to the study participants. However, the participants from Kazakhstan have higher perception levels than the Chinese participants. This result can be related to the quality of education of the course which is taught at universities, lack of content and pedagogical knowledge about inclusive education which is a result of the course, and lack of experience in teaching and teaching practice to students with SEN (Çelik & Zehir Topkaya, 2017). Another significant finding of the current research is that participants' attitudes level is significantly different from each other. Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitude level is significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers. Additionally, Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes are significantly higher than Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes (p=0.00*; p=0.00* Tamhane's T2 test). On the other hand, there is not a statistically significant difference between Turkish and Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers. The result is in line with Zhalelkanova's research (2019) that found slight differences when comparing Kazakh and Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching English to students with SEN. These results can be interpreted in the light of the cultural context of these countries. Inclusive education was started in 1983, firstly with the law 'Law on Children with Special Needs' in Türkiye. The law mentions that all students have equal learning rights and can study and teach in the same classroom whether they have a disability or not (Students in Special Education, 1983). From this perspective, the Republic of Türkiye dealt with the special education issue much earlier than this study's other two countries, Kazakhstan and China. Even though the Republic of Kazakhstan made necessary regulations about inclusive education later than the Republic of Türkiye, the participants have a similar attitude level to Turkish participants. Despite a little research being carried out about inclusive education in Kazakhstan (Zholtayeva et al., 2013), Kazakhs pre-service EFL teachers are conscious of inclusive education practices. On the other hand, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers have lower attitudes than Turkish and Kazakh study participants. The Chinese government made compulsory education mandatory for students with special educational needs in 1986 (Worrell & Taber, 2009), and after necessary legislative regulations were made, the government increased the budget to support students with SEN (MOEPRC, 2015). Despite sufficient legal arrangements, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers have the

lowest attitude level among the participant countries in the research. Research shows that pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to work with students who need special education despite having positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Lambe & Bones, 2006; Stavropoulou & Markopoulou, 2015). Another important finding of the current research is a significant difference in knowledge sub-dimension among the participants who took part in the research from different cultural contexts. The scores of pre-service EFL teachers from Türkiye in the knowledge dimension are significantly higher than those in Kazakhstan (p=0.01*; Tamhane's T2 test). The scores of pre-service EFL teachers from China in the knowledge dimension were significantly higher than those of pre-service EFL teachers in Kazakhstan (p=0.03*; Tamhane's T2 test). There is a single course on inclusive education at universities in Türkiye and Kazakhstan; however, there is no course related to inclusive education in the Chinese context. Assuming a course can provide both content and pedagogical knowledge and practicing the acquired knowledge of the course in real classrooms about teaching English to students with SEN would be an imaginary situation. As Rouse (2006, p.11) states, "developing effective inclusive practice is about not only extending teachers' knowledge but also encouraging them to do things differently and getting them to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs. In other words, it should be about 'knowing', 'doing', and 'believing'". The education of preservice English language instructors concerning inclusive education can be enhanced by courses focused on inclusivity, individualization, and modification of teaching methods. The inclusive education course offers extensive training on inclusive education, encompassing its definition and the development of instruction tailored for students facing various challenges in learning English for diverse causes. This extensive training can augment preservice English language teachers' comprehension of inclusive education, their responsibilities within it, and their methods for fostering inclusivity in their classrooms. In inclusive English-language instruction, differentiating instruction for students with learning problems necessitates the individualization and adaptation of instructional methods (Smith, 2018). Preservice English language teachers can enhance their understanding of differentiating instruction in special education, inclusion, education for hospitalized students, learning difficulties, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder through the individualization and adaptation of their teaching courses. Preservice English-language instructors can customize and modify their training, establish both long and short-term learning objectives for their tailored instruction, and create various assessment instruments and evaluation criteria for their unique instruction in this course (Yastıbaş, 2021)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Relying on the findings and discussion, the results of the present study could suggest that English teacher training programs in China can change the 'Inclusive Education' course content to improve the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers. In addition, Chinese pre-service EFL teachers can internalise the theoretical knowledge they have learned from the course content through teaching practice to students with learning difficulties in a natural classroom environment. On the other hand, in the sub-dimension of knowledge, it was found that Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers have a lower level of knowledge than Turkish and Chinese pre-service EFL teachers. In this context, various academic activities can be organized by the relevant units to increase the knowledge level of Kazakh pre-service EFL teachers about inclusive education. For example, conferences, webinars, or workshops can be organized about inclusive education, and these academic events will contribute positively to the knowledge level of the participants.

The study's findings suggest that pre-service EFL teachers should practice their content and pedagogical knowledge about inclusive education in schools with children who need special education. In this regard, each pre-service EFL teacher should have a chance to teach course content to children with SEN. Thus, as pre-service EFL teachers gain experience teaching students with SEN, they can become more responsive and open about inclusive education. In this perspective, pre-service EFL teachers should be trained to teach all the students with diverse abilities in different contexts. For example, children with SEN may have aggressive behaviors in the classroom, attention disorders, or language disabilities. In this respect, pre-service EFL teachers should be taught classroom management skills in inclusive education (AlMahdi & Bukamal, 2019).

Since the data for this study were collected from Turkey, Kazakhstan, and China, it covers Asian countries. Countries from continents such as Europe, America, and Africa could not be included in the study. For this reason, data could not be obtained on inclusive education practices, perspectives, and policies in foreign language teacher training. Another point is that quantitative methods were used in the study to collect data from English teacher candidates. Since qualitative data were not used in the study, it was not possible to gain in-depth insight into the participants' thoughts on inclusive education in foreign language education. Future research can be designed taking these limitations into account.

Last but not least, as future teachers, pre-service EFL teachers have a significant role in carrying out effective inclusive education. In this respect, their training and education about inclusive education enable more equal learning opportunities for future students with SEN.

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Pedagogical Mediation for Visually Impaired Students

Mediación Pedagógica para Estudiantes con Discapacidad Visual

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Abstract

This case study began in the first semester of 2013 as part of an integrated English course offered at a public university in Costa Rica. Data were collected at three intervals—2013, 2019, and 2020—to explore the experiences of several professors who taught visually impaired or blind students. The research is grounded in the personal experience of one of the researchers, who had a blind student in her class. It examines the perceptions and experiences of the participating teachers, as well as the challenges they encountered over time while striving to foster an inclusive classroom environment. The implications for theory and practice are discussed, and recommendations for further research are proposed.

Keywords: visual impairment, teaching English, inclusion, pedagogical tools

Resumen

El presente estudio de caso inició durante el primer semestre de 2013 y se centró en un curso de inglés integrado que se imparte en una universidad pública en Costa Rica. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo en tres periodos: 2013, 2019 y 2020, durante los cuales se obtuvo información sobre las experiencias de varios docentes que trabajaron con estudiantes con discapacidad visual. Este estudio surgió a partir de las experiencias personales de una de las investigadoras, quien tuvo en su clase a un estudiante invidente. Se estudian las percepciones y vivencias de los docentes participantes, así como los desafíos que enfrentaron a lo largo del tiempo en su búsqueda de la inclusión en el aula. Se discuten implicaciones teórico-prácticas y se plantean recomendaciones para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: discapacidad visual, enseñanza del inglés, inclusión, herramientas pedagógicas

Resumo

O presente estudo de caso teve início no primeiro semestre de 2013 e concentrou-se em um curso integrado de inglês oferecido em uma universidade pública na Costa Rica. A coleta de dados foi realizada em três períodos: 2013, 2019 e 2020, durante os quais foram obtidas informações sobre as experiências de vários docentes que trabalharam com estudantes com deficiência visual. Este estudo surgiu a partir das experiências pessoais de uma das pesquisadoras, que teve em sua turma um estudante cego. Analisam-se as percepções e vivências dos docentes participantes, bem como os desafios enfrentados ao longo do tempo em sua busca pela inclusão em sala de aula. Discutem-se implicações teórico-práticas e apresentam-se recomendações para pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: deficiência visual, ensino de inglês, inclusão, ferramentas pedagógicas

The first academic semester of 2013 presented our instructor with an unforeseen challenge: a visually impaired student enrolled in her integrated English course. In addition to the inherent difficulties posed by this condition, the students' language proficiency was not aligned with the expected level for the course. The instructor conducted the necessary inquiries to provide a quality education for her student, but found that the university's support for teaching visually impaired students was quite limited. This reality turned the teaching-learning process more complicated, yet the professor remained committed to helping the student improve his skills throughout the course. This case marked the beginning of a series of new experiences with visually impaired students.

The initial phase of this research originated from the instructor's insufficient professional preparation for managing and instructing visually impaired students. An analysis of the curriculum for the bachelor's degree in English teaching revealed a lack of methodological courses focused on teaching students with disabilities. At the time this research was conducted, there was a significant deficiency in training on effective pedagogical mediation processes for students with diverse educational needs, including those with this need. The second phase of this investigation arose from a comparative analysis of the professional training and support conditions at this public Costa Rican university between 2013 and 2019. By the latter year, partly due to the implementation of institutional initiatives— such as the Research Project 0604-17, known as Project ACCESS, and developed by the researchers at UNA (2019-2021), which designed and distributed accessible materials for visually impaired students — the conditions for both educators and students had improved (Universidad Nacional, 2019-2021). Given that the inclusion of students with visual impairments in the classroom may induce anxiety and uncertainty among educators (Stone, Kay & Reynolds, 2019; Rushahu, 2023; Amponsah & Bekele, 2022; Firat, 2021), this study aims to 1) identify the factors that facilitate the teaching-learning process and 2) propose strategies for developing English lessons that ensure a safe, efficient, and natural learning environment for teachers and students.

This study is situated within an integrated English course at the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica. This university offers a series of English courses designed to promote the development of foreign language skills among students from various degree programs that are taught.

The course in which this research was conducted is the third in a sequence of four courses. As outlined in the syllabus, this course continues with the development of the four language skills—listening comprehension, oral production, reading, and writing—introduced in previous levels. By the end of this course, students are expected to achieve a basic level of language proficiency, A2.1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) *(Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje* [ELCL], 2008, p. 1). Additionally, the methodology

of these courses follows an eclectic approach that integrates the development of various language skills. The instructor assumes the role of facilitator, implementing a series of communicative activities, both oral and written, while focusing on meaningful contexts relevant to the students (ELCL, 2008, p. 3).

Background and Theoretical Framework

With the enactment of *Ley 7600*, the Law on Equality for Persons with Disabilities, on May 29, 1996, the reality for Costa Ricans with disabilities significantly changed. This legislation has expanded opportunities for many individuals whose prospects were previously limited, particularly in the realm of inclusive education. For instance, Article 2 of this law provides a definition of the concept of accessibility: According to Ley 7600, measures taken by public and private institutions ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and other services and facilities open or provided to the public or for public use. These measures also include identifying and removing such barriers. (1996; authors' translation).

We can then understand that, until the enactment of this law, people with disabilities were likely unable to access the basic, everyday aspects mentioned in Article 2, which have generally been taken for granted by those who enjoy these privileges. Likewise, this law defines disability as the condition resulting from the interaction between people with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments and attitudinal conditions that act as environmental barriers preventing their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others *(Ley 7600, 1996). These two definitions may seem basic, but they are crucial for ensuring that individuals understand their condition does not determine their future. Since 1996, the doors have been opened to begin the road to inclusion in Costa Rica. According to Consejo Nacional de Rectores, Programa Estado de la Nación* (2017):

In the 2015-2016 admission process, *Centro de Asesoría y Servicios a Estudiantes con Discapacidad* [the Centre for Advice and Services for Students with Disabilities] (CASED) of the University of Costa Rica (UCR) with the support of *Comisión Interuniversitaria para la Accesibilidad en la Educación Superior* [Inter-University Commission for Accessibility in Higher Education] (CIAES), affiliated to the Consejo Nacional de Rectores [National Council of Rectors] (CONARE), coordinated the assessment and registration of 1,977 individuals who required adaptations an Academic Aptitude Test (PAA) due to visual, motor, hearing, emotional, learning, attention deficit, and multiple disabilities, across various regions of the country. (CONARE, Programa Estado de la Nación, 2017)

Valverde (2018) documented the registration process for students with disabilities at Universidad Nacional between 2012 and 2017, noting that since 2012, there has been a significant increase in applications for admission of students with disabilities to the National University (p. 6).

Consequently, just as people with disabilities have gained access to a wider spectrum of possibilities, so too have foreign language classrooms had to consider more aspects to make lessons accessible. It is necessary, then, to categorize *disabilities*, which are expressed in English classrooms with greater diversity. This diversity is constituted not only by the disabled population but also by the entire student body with their different needs and learning styles. Therefore, we must consider this population a heterogeneous group. Among individuals with disabilities, there is a significant influx of those with some form of visual impairment. This condition ranges from mild to severe impairments to blindness. Within the category of blindness, there are subcategories based on severity. The medical field, as well as specialists in optometry and ophthalmology, refer to this population as blind individuals, individuals with low vision, and individuals with temporary visual field restrictions. Among them, those people with retinitis pigmentosa, who fall into the latter category, experience a progressive reduction in their vision over time.

According to Naipal and Rampersad (2018), visual impairment (VI) is a condition of visual performance that cannot be remedied by refractive correction glasses or contact lens surgery, or medical methods, and consequently results in functional limitations of the visual system (p. 1). The causes of these conditions differ depending on the region in which they develop. Some of the consequences of VI, which are worth emphasizing, primarily involve the debilitating effect on the individual, affecting their performance by impacting their quality of life and daily activities. According to the authors, 80% of learning occurs through sight. Thus, if VI occurs in the early stages of childhood, it will affect the individual's performance from a very early age, which is why 90% of children with VI-related conditions are deprived of education (Naipal & Rampersad, 2018, pp. 1-3).

From experience, we have concluded that there are aspects related to the processes of acceptance and the stages individuals must navigate as a result of the changes their condition generates. For example, students who enter university with favorable vision but experience a rapid decline due to environmental factors, such as stress and extensive reading across various environments or interfaces, may find themselves unprepared to accept this change. This period has been identified by authors such as Cholden (1958) as a phase of mourning (p. 75). It is crucial to emphasize that each person understands and accepts their condition in a unique way. These aspects will influence their performance and their tolerance of adaptations and accommodations. Adaptations are implemented for students with special educational needs, while accommodations refer to changes made to planned activities (Harrison et al., 2013; Martínez Hernández & Bellés-Fortuño, 2021).

It has been observed that individuals with visual impairments must navigate various stages of adjustment, particularly in terms of accepting the changes their condition entails. For instance, students who begin university with normal vision but experience a rapid decline due to environmental factors, such as stress and extensive reading in diverse settings, may struggle to accept these changes. This process of adaptation can be challenging, as it involves coping with emotional and psychological responses (Wright, 1983) and requires the individual to gradually adjust to new limitations (Livneh & Antonak, 2005). Additionally, the environmental factors—such as academic demands and the need to interact with different interfaces—can exacerbate the challenges of acceptance (Reeve, 2002; Schneider & Black, 2003). These factors highlight the importance of providing adequate support systems to help students navigate these changes and foster successful adaptation (Friedman & Owen, 2007; Tinto, 2012; Wright, 1983).

According to Evans et al. (2017), several models have attempted to understand disability throughout history. The first of these is the moral model, which emerged before the 19th century and viewed disability as a moral failing or a consequence of sin, often associated with divine punishment or moral wrongdoing (Goffman, 1963). This model stigmatized individuals with disabilities, framing them as deserving of pity or exclusion. The medical model, which took root in the 1800s, categorized disability as a pathological condition to be cured or managed. This model reinforced the idea that the "normal" individual was the ideal, positioning people with disabilities as exceptions to the standard of normalcy (Oliver, 1996). In response to this, the functional limitations or rehabilitationist model emerged in the late 19th century. This model focused on the medical and functional aspects of disability and institutionalized those who did not conform to societal norms, often separating them from mainstream society for their own rehabilitation (Shakespeare, 2006). In contrast, the social model of disability, which developed in the mid-20th century, emphasized that disability is not an inherent trait of the individual but rather a social construct, shaped by societal barriers, prejudice, and discrimination (Barnes, 1991; Oliver, 1996). This model shifted the focus from medical interventions to societal changes that would eliminate obstacles and promote inclusion. Finally, the sociopolitical minority group model emerged in the late 1970s as an extension of the social model, arising from the disability rights movement and critiquing the medical model's paternalistic approach. This model reframes disability as a political issue, emphasizing the rights and autonomy of individuals with disabilities, and calling for societal and legislative changes to address the oppression they face (Charlton, 1998; Stone, 1984). These models reflect the evolving understanding of disability, from a moral and medical issue to one of social justice and human rights, underlining the importance of an inclusive society that supports people with disabilities through both policy and cultural change.

This historical perspective allows us to understand that individuals with disabilities and their families have faced numerous struggles to gain access, at least partially and legally, to rights common to all people, regardless of disability status. It also highlights

that this population has taken considerable time to assert their rights and establish themselves as individuals in a society that validates what it considers normal, often relegating those who do not conform to these parameters to a secondary or lesser position. Hence, it is crucial to consider the challenges and opportunities that an adequate assessment of the difficulties faced by the disabled population and by foreign language teachers in this context can offer.

During the supervised professional practicum, educators often encounter significant challenges when working with visually impaired learners. As Kocyigit and Artar (2015) note, it is not surprising that teaching a student with a visual impairment can be demanding, especially from the teacher's perspective (p. 3). They argue that although all educators are expected to adapt their teaching methodologies to accommodate diverse learning needs, teaching a student with a visual impairment presents unique challenges for both inexperienced teachers and those without prior experience with this population (Kocyigit & Artar, 2015, p. 3). In a similar vein, Castellana and Salas (2005, p. 31) highlight the critical importance of specialized teacher training in this context, noting that participants unanimously agreed on the need for educators to receive specific training to address the needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, they discuss the discomfort and insecurity often experienced by teachers when students with disabilities are present in the classroom, noting that these feelings are a common barrier to effective teaching and interaction (Castellana & Salas, 2005, p. 8). This aligns with Florian's (2014) findings, which emphasize that including students with disabilities can present both challenges and opportunities for teachers, and that professional development is crucial to overcoming these challenges. According to Ainscow (2005), inclusive education requires a shift in educators' mindsets, in which understanding and responding to diverse needs become integral to fostering a supportive learning environment. Moreover, Miyauchi (2020) suggests that teachers' attitudes toward students with visual impairments are influenced by their training, experience, and the support systems available to them.

Like the teacher, the student with visual impairment also faces challenges both outside and within the educational context. According to Judith Kormos and Anne Margaret Smith (2012), as well as Martínez-Hernández and Bellés-Fortuño (2021), disability has been perceived as a social barrier for some years now. From this perspective, students with a disability face the initial challenge of demonstrating that they can function adequately in social and educational contexts. Kormos and Smith (2012) also mention that educational institutions tend to take the implementation of disability legislation relatively seriously (p. 10). However, in some cases, students or even parents assume that special education institutions are a better option for these learners. In other cases, the students or their parents decide that it is best for them to learn alongside regular students by making use of curricular adjustments that allow them to be integrated into the school. These accommodations allow them to be present, but without the expectation of access to all the activities and facilities to which other learners are exposed (Kormos & Smith, 2012, pp. 10-12).

As can be seen, attention to diversity encompasses various aspects. In a truly inclusive educational model, additional support for people with disabilities would not be necessary, as all teachers would teach with the aim of including all members of the class. Materials would be presented in a variety of formats, eliminating the need for adaptations, and assistive technology would be available to all (Kormos & Smith, 2012, p. 12).

The classroom environment presents significant challenges for teachers and students with visual impairments. From a social context perspective, there are notable deficiencies and high expectations that are not always achievable. This highlights the importance of raising public awareness and promoting initiatives that normalize inclusion in educational settings. In some cases, addressing educational needs can be resolved more swiftly due to the simplicity of the situation or the specific characteristics of each learner. For visually impaired students, their needs are often categorized as special needs. Teachers frequently find themselves preparing specifically for a blind student while also trying to engage the majority of the class. Various needs are associated with this special condition (Aquino Zúñiga, García Martínez, & Izquierdo, 2012). Among the most crucial is the need to establish a relationship with the student as an individual, rather than focusing solely on their impairment (p. 11). Additionally, it is essential to foster students' autonomy, acknowledge their limitations, and understand the characteristics of their condition to respond appropriately (Aquino Zúñiga, García Martínez, & Izquierdo, 2012).

In recent years, this topic has received growing attention as increasing numbers of students with visual impairments enroll in mainstream institutions that are not specifically designed to address diverse educational needs. Research by Robles et al. (2024), Martínez-Hernández and Bellés-Fortuño (2021), Tinto (2012), among others, underscores the importance of this issue within the field of second and foreign language education.

Methodology

This study is based on an interpretive or naturalist paradigm, as it seeks to uncover the feelings of professors who have worked with blind students. From an epistemological standpoint, this research is grounded in a social model (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Olkin, 2009) that conceptualizes disability as a social construct, shaped by societal perceptions. It is also non-experimental, as it was conducted without deliberate manipulation of variables (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista, 2006, p. 205) and involved collecting data on events, communities, contexts, variables, or their relationships at multiple points in time to evaluate changes. The selected time intervals (2013, 2019, and 2020) were determined by the enrollment patterns of students with visual impairments in the integrated English courses. Data collection was conducted only during the semesters in which such students participated,

which explains the irregular spacing of the study periods. The research also aligns with the interpretive research paradigm, which, according to Cohen et al. (2011), focuses on understanding and explaining the intersubjectivities that shape individuals within a specific context (p. 17).

In terms of depth, this research aims to understand human actions, social facts, and culture through interpretation, as noted by Gadamer (1999/1960, p. 317). From this methodological lens, the goal is to uncover various types of explanations, depending on the individuals interacting in the foreign language classroom and the meanings they attribute to their relationships and to themselves in that context. Thus, this research adopts a qualitative methodology, considering the perspectives of various individuals involved in the teaching-learning process of students with visual impairments at different points in time. These individuals include teachers who have taught students with varying levels of visual impairment and the visually impaired students themselves. More specifically, the study adopts a case study design because the "researchers focus[ed] on a unit of study known as a bounded system (e.g., individual teachers, a classroom, or a school)" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016, p. 444).

Data collection was conducted at three distinct time frames. In 2013, three professors were surveyed via email using a questionnaire. In 2019, the same questionnaire was administered in paper form to seven other instructors, and in 2020, it was conducted via telephone interviews with three more professors. The instrument, comprising five open-ended questions, was distributed exclusively to educators teaching students with visual impairments at the time. Triangulation was achieved by incorporating class notes and observations from one of the researchers.

This research initially involved three teachers from the integrated English courses who worked with a blind student during 2012 and 2013. Each professor was responsible for a different course. One of the researchers was the instructor for the student in the third course, allowing her to conduct participatory but non-intrusive observation, as she was familiar with the student. According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2016), this type of observation is advantageous as it enables the researcher to gather information and build a relationship with the participants, which would not be possible through non-participatory observation. However, this method also has drawbacks, such as potential bias from the observer's proximity to the participants and the challenge of simultaneously participating and collecting data (p. 382). To mitigate these issues, interviews were conducted with all the instructors who taught the first blind student.

Over the years, the number of students with visual impairments at this public university has been increasing. Consequently, in the second phase of the research, conducted during the second academic semester of 2019, a group of seven professors who were responsible for eight students with visual impairments was included as participants. Some of these instructors had previously taught students with visual impairments, while others had this as their first experience. The educators were asked

the same five open-ended questions that were administered back in 2013. However, this time the questions were provided on paper, allowing the professors to respond in their own handwriting, thereby reflecting their personal feelings and experiences.

The final data collection stage of this study occurred in 2020. By this time, the educational context had changed significantly, marked by the presence and support of two notable projects, namely, ACCESS and UNA Educación de Calidad [UEC] (Universidad Nacional, 2025). Three students with visual impairments were enrolled, prompting telephone interviews with the three instructors responsible for these groups. The instrument used was the same one designed and applied in 2013 and again in 2019.

Since conducting research, it is desirable to utilize multiple sources of information; this study employed three distinct methods of data collection. The first two methods included the professor-researcher's class notes and classroom observations. Additionally, interviews were conducted with three instructors who had worked with the student before and after the start of this research.

During the first phase, professors were contacted to request their participation, and the questionnaire was sent to their email addresses. In the second phase, the same questionnaire was administered via written interviews; participants received a document containing the five printed questions and were given time to respond. All interviewees in this phase completed the instruments simultaneously.

Due to the pandemic and associated health restrictions, telephone interviews were conducted with the three participants. As in the previous stages, the same five questions were used. One of the researchers collected, recorded, and transcribed the participants' information.

The class notes and observations obtained by the examiner include detailed descriptions of class activities, the teacher's perceptions of the student, the methodologies employed, and the student's interactions with classmates. These notes reveal how the teacher responsible for the visually impaired student chose to look beyond the student's disability and establish an academic relationship. Through this relationship, the instructor successfully taught the visually impaired student and emphasized the student's responsibility within the course context.

During each class session, the educator assigned student tutors to assist the blind student, allowing the professor to address the needs of the other learners in the group. These tutors were responsible for reading printed information and describing accompanying images. The tutors played a supportive role for both the student and the educator. Once the group was organized, the instructor worked more individually with the blind student.

The questionnaire administered to professors included questions designed to explore various topics related to their experiences, such as the following:

- Feelings and emotions
- Pre-training
- Methodology used
- Challenges faced
- Support received from the university

To complement this study, the student's learning process was monitored by another educator who participated in the second stage of the research process and taught the student in a subsequent course. In this second stage, the research initiated in 2013 continued through interviews with professors who had taught students with visual disabilities and with the respective students who were willing to participate in this research.

The study also benefited from collaboration with administrative units, such as the institution's Registry Department. In this office, the person responsible for addressing educational needs provided data on the increase in the number of students with visual disabilities admitted from 2013 to the present.

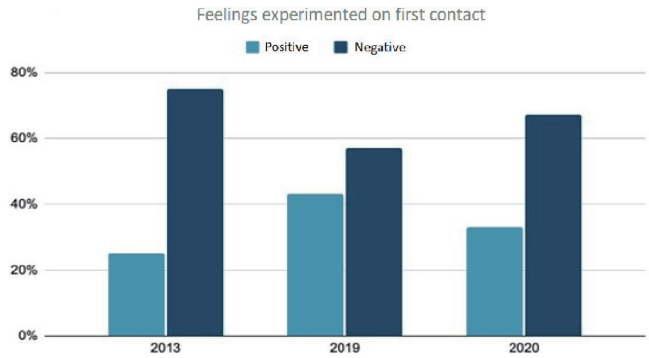
Data Analysis and Results

In this section, we present a detailed analysis of the surveys conducted with the professors. This analysis involves comparing these instructors' perspectives and examining how such perspectives have evolved over time for each question answered by those who have taught students with visual impairments.

The first question in the questionnaire asked professors about the feelings they experienced upon learning that students with visual impairments were present in their classrooms. The second question studied whether instructors possessed the necessary pedagogical tools to effectively teach students with visual disabilities. The third question examined the methodological changes required to accommodate these students. The fourth question addressed the challenges faced by both teachers and students from an academic perspective. Finally, the fifth question pertained to the support received from the university.

When analyzing the results for the first question, illustrated in Figure 1, it can be observed that all teachers surveyed in 2013 expressed concern and anguish upon learning of the presence of blind or visually impaired students in their classrooms. In contrast, in 2019, 57% of the teachers surveyed reported experiencing negative feelings, such as bewilderment, fear, and surprise, while the remaining 43% reported positive feelings, such as confidence and comfort.

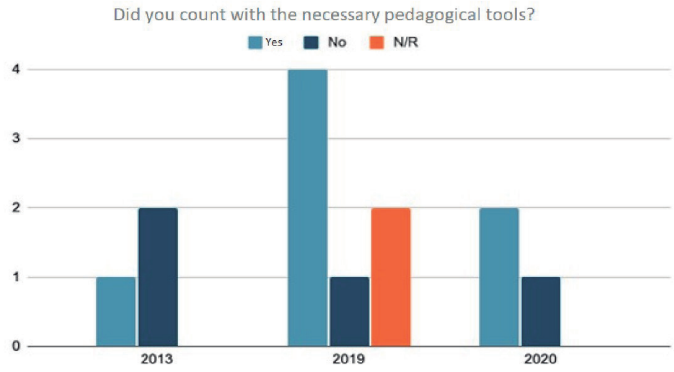
Figure 1. Range of feelings experienced by academics at first contact with students with impairments



Note: percentages derived from the professor's survey responses collected in 2013, 2019, and 2020

When asked in 2013 whether they had the necessary pedagogical tools to address the challenge, as illustrated in Figure 2, 33% of the academics indicated they had the required tools, while 67% reported they did not. In 2019, 57% of respondents stated they had the necessary tools, 14% indicated they did not, and 29% did not respond to the question. Similar percentages were observed in responses from 2020: 67% of the teachers surveyed reported having the necessary pedagogical tools, and 33% reported not having them.

Figure 2. Teachers' perceptions of having the necessary pedagogical tools



Note: percentages derived from professors' survey responses during 2013, 2019, and 2020.

The third question inquired about the changes in teaching methodology that teachers had to implement. The academics surveyed in 2013 reported a series of methodological changes or adaptations, among which the most commonly used strategies were constant communication with students and adjustments in exam administration. Other changes mentioned included providing additional explanations, using digitized teaching materials and recordings, allowing oral responses when written answers were required, and assistance from classmates, among others. In 2019, educators indicated that they had used digitalized materials (57%) and made changes in test administration (43%). The remaining percentage in 2019 is divided among providing personalized attention, using a laptop with appropriate materials, conducting individual tutorials, and positioning students at the front near the teacher's space. In 2020, 67% of the teachers surveyed reported using laptops with suitable materials and digitized teaching materials. The remaining 33% reported that they had not made any specific methodological changes, instead offering the same considerations to all students.

The next question explores the challenges faced by both teachers and students. In 2013, teachers identified the greatest challenges as overcoming negative feelings, integrating the student into the group, time constraints, and learning to teach a student with disabilities. In 2019, the responses varied, with teachers indicating challenges such as time limitations, digitizing the textbook, verifying the materials to be used, designing and adapting additional materials, creating evaluations, accessing multimedia materials, and assigning a person to assist with notetaking for the student. Similarly, teachers surveyed in 2020 expressed that the main challenges were time constraints, using virtual environments, and providing support in writing and spelling for visually impaired students.

Finally, the last question addressed the support received from the university. In 2013, teachers indicated that the most significant support came from UNA Educación de Calidad (UEC)—a project that oversees the provision of inclusive education opportunities at UNA (Universidad Nacional, 2025). Additionally, professors and students received support from other students in the group, from other teachers who had experience teaching students with visual disabilities, and from tutors from the Academic Success Program, provided by the Student Services Department. The experience in 2019 highlighted the support from UEC(Universidad Nacional, 2025). However, added support instances also emerged, such as the university's Department of Guidance and Psychology, which provided students and professors with a student note-taker. Finally, instructors surveyed in 2020 indicated only three sources of support: 1. other educators who had already had the same experience, 2. receiving the digitized teaching material, and 3. follow-up by Project ACCESS, whose objective was to provide digitalized, adapted material for students and professors.

The professors stated that not all were adequately prepared, despite their professional training, to support students with visual impairments in their English learning. Factors such as limited initial support, insufficient materials for these students, and time constraints significantly impacted the educational experience in the described context. On the other hand, according to the surveys, some teachers noted that, initially, the assistance they received was minimal, and they had to learn and adapt as they progressed due to their lack of prior experience.

The class observations analyzed pertain to one of the researchers' initial experiences with a blind student. These observations highlight the challenges faced by the student and the professor. Both experienced frequent frustration due to the lack of resources, trained personnel, and the instructor's inexperience in such contexts. Additionally, the student, enrolled in a foreign language course, had limited strategies to implement and often relied entirely on his classmates and professor, who diligently assisted and learned alongside him.

Another relevant aspect of the teaching process was the participation of tutors provided by an instance under the tutelage of the Vice-Rectorate for Education at UNA (n.d). This office assigned an advanced student from one of the university's English teaching programs as a tutor for the blind learner. The tutor's role was to accompany and reinforce content throughout the course. However, as the professor noted, due to a lack of experience and preparation, the tutor sometimes hindered the process by completing exercises and tasks for the student rather than providing the intended support.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights significant gaps in the curricula of higher education institutions that offer English-teaching programs. Specifically, there is a lack of courses that adequately prepare students to address various forms of disability. The findings clearly show that this curricular omission has a direct impact on teachers' preparedness, contributing to the feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, and stress reported by the professors who participated in the study. The data analysis indicates that these curricular deficiencies contribute to the feelings of helplessness and stress reported by the professors who participated in this study. This research identifies a significant opportunity for higher education institutions to enhance their support for blind and visually impaired students. While there are existing entities that provide educational support, the evidence suggests that these efforts remain fragmented and insufficient; there is a promising potential to further develop and maintain a cadre of qualified personnel specifically trained to guide and support this population. Strengthening these structures would allow universities not only to respond to students'

immediate needs but also to establish long-term, sustainable practices for inclusion. By addressing this factor, universities can create more accessible and inclusive learning environments, fostering greater equity and inclusion within the academic community. Based on the results, the following actions are recommended:

Advocate for Strategic Curriculum Reform: Encourage curriculum developers to integrate courses that equip future English teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively support students with disabilities. Such integration should not be optional or peripheral but embedded as an essential component of teacher preparation programs.

Promote Faculty Development: Motivate faculty leaders to incorporate workshops and training sessions that prepare current teachers to support students with disabilities. These initiatives will foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Continuous professional development should be aligned with emerging challenges and informed by the experiences of instructors who have worked with visually impaired students.

Establish Support Networks: Encourage faculty to create and sustain commissions or support groups among academics with experience teaching blind or visually impaired students. These groups can provide both emotional and professional support to new teachers, thereby enhancing their ability to teach this population effectively. Such networks can also help create institutional guidelines and best practices that reduce the sense of isolation often reported by teachers.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of professors who have worked with visually impaired or blind students in the integrated English course at Universidad Nacional. However, limitations must be acknowledged and addressed via further research. First, the study was based on a small group of professors from a single institution, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the reliance on teachers' perceptions and self-reported experiences may introduce a degree of subjectivity, as the voices of students with visual impairments were not directly included in the data. Third, the study focused on specific time intervals (2013, 2019, and 2020), which, while useful for comparison, do not capture the full evolution of inclusive practices across a longer span of time or in different institutional contexts. Finally, the research design was primarily qualitative, which limits the possibility of establishing broader patterns or statistical relationships.

Given these limitations, several recommendations should be adopted in future research and practice. Studies with larger, more diverse samples, including participants from multiple universities or educational settings, would help increase

the generalizability of the findings. Incorporating the perspectives of students with visual impairments themselves would provide a more holistic view of the challenges and successes of inclusive English language teaching. Furthermore, integrating mixed-methods designs that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches could enrich understanding and yield more robust conclusions. On a practical level, teacher training programs should prioritize the development of pedagogical tools and strategies tailored to the needs of visually impaired learners, ensuring that inclusion is both a theoretical and practical commitment in English language teaching.

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Book Review

Generative AI and Education, digital pedagogies, teaching innovation and learning design

by B. Mairéad Pratschke, Springer, 2024

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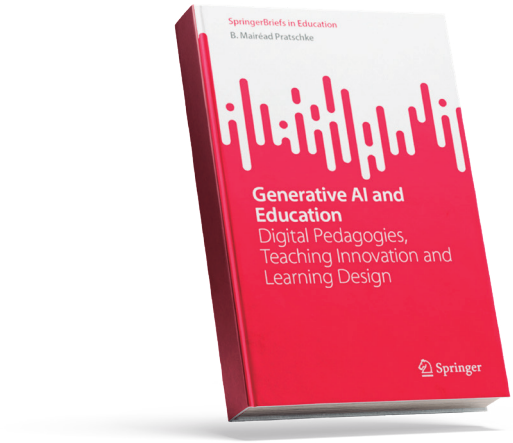

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Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIEd) has been discussed for the last 30 years, yet it remains a developing area within educational technology. Despite its long history, many educators still struggle to use it effectively in their teaching on a larger scale, and questions persist about how it can truly transform teaching and learning across education (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

This book explores the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) on education, highlighting the urgent need for a paradigm shift in teaching practices and learning design to better align with the demands and realities of today's world. It is part of the *SpringerBriefs in Education* series, which provides concise and accessible summaries of current research. *Generative AI and Education* fit this model by offering a focused exploration of GAI's influence on pedagogy and learning design.

Designed primarily for educators, the book aims to promote artificial intelligence (AI) literacy and equip readers with the tools to collaborate with AI in creating new educational experiences. It promotes a model of education where humans and AI work together to generate, discover, and construct knowledge in more dynamic and inclusive ways.

Although no single scholar formally introduced the concept of "Generative AI in Education," the field grew rapidly after the release of GPT-3.5 and GPT-4 between 2022 and 2023. Early academic discussions were influenced by researchers such as Neil Selwyn (2022), who examined the teaching and ethical challenges raised by ChatGPT, and Mollick & Mollick (2023), whose work showed how AI could support teaching, assessment, and collaboration between humans and machines. Reports from UNESCO (2023) and the OECD (2023) also played an important role by providing initial guidelines for the use of AI in schools and universities. Compared to these first explorations (which were mostly introductory or focused on short-term concerns), Pratschke's book offers a more structured and theoretically grounded contribution by connecting generative AI with digital pedagogy, learning design, and a clear instructional model (Generativism). In doing so, the book not only summarizes the early debates but also provides a clear structure that strengthens the field and outlines more developed directions for future research and practice, as we will explore in the next part of the review.

The book develops several key themes that help explain how generative AI is reshaping education. First, Pratschke argues that GAI requires a major shift in digital pedagogy, encouraging educators to move beyond simply delivering content to create more open, participatory, and collaborative learning experiences. Second, she introduces the idea of "human AI collaboration", where AI works alongside teachers and students to enhance what they can do. A third important theme is "Generativism", a new instructional model that focuses on creativity, dialogue, and building knowledge with the support of AI tools. Finally, the book shows that these changes necessitate rethinking essential aspects of learning design, such as assessment, personalization,

and instructional planning, to better align educational practices with emerging technological realities.

The book is organized into seven chapters that move from foundational concepts to practical implications for teaching and learning. The first chapter provides the historical, technological, and educational context necessary to understand GAI's role in transforming education. Rather than presenting GAI as a mere digital tool, the author frames it as a generative and conversational technology capable of challenging traditional assumptions, such as the idea that the teacher is the only source of information, that written tests are the best way to evaluate learning, and that learning only happens inside the classroom. Building on this foundation, the following chapters explore how the growing use of generative AI is reshaping the educational landscape. The author looks not only at the technological changes, but also at how they affect teachers' roles, the way learning is designed, and how institutions operate (including how they design policies, support teachers, and provide resources for AI integration).

Throughout the book, the author introduces new concepts and ideas such as the concept of generativism, intelligent communities and the human AI model, where AI does not replace the teacher but works alongside them to support knowledge creation. She also explains practical tools such as prompt engineering and Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) in a clear, approachable way, and offers frameworks that help educators redesign lessons, personalize learning, and rethink assessment in this new digital era.

The book supports its ideas with a solid mix of theory, real examples, and references to current developments in education and AI. It uses well-known learning theories like constructivism, generative learning, and models such as *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge* "TPACK" (updated to include AI) to explain how teaching and learning can change with GAI. It also includes many practical examples from schools and universities around the world, showing how AI is already being used in lesson planning, tutoring, and assessment. This balance among theory, practice, and critical reflection makes the book's evidence strong and convincing.

Because the book is written for educators who may not be familiar with AI, most technical terms are carefully explained in chapter one. The author makes a strong effort to clarify and contextualize complex ideas; however, some readers may still find parts of the book challenging. This is largely due to the rapid introduction of new AI tools and technical concepts, which can feel overwhelming without prior exposure to digital technologies. Nevertheless, the book maintains a reader-friendly tone and guides educators through these complexities with patience and clarity.

While the book successfully introduces key concepts and encourages educators to rethink traditional models, its most significant strength lies in its practical orientation. Rather than remaining at a theoretical level, it offers concrete classroom examples,

implementation strategies, and instructional frameworks that support the effective integration of GAI in real-world settings. From prompt engineering to AI assisted instructional design and personalized tutoring systems, the book gives educators actionable tools that make its content not only informative but also highly applicable: among the practical examples throughout the book, Chapter 3 presents models for human AI collaboration through techniques such as "chain of thought" prompting and Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG), enabling teachers to build their own AI powered tools.

Another strength of the book lies in its relevance to educators from various backgrounds and experience levels. Rather than targeting only specialists in educational technology or instructional design, *Generative AI and Education* is written for the majority of educators who may lack a background in digital pedagogy or AI. It aims to bridge that gap by providing accessible explanations and practical tools that help them transition into AI-enhanced teaching. Moreover, it speaks directly to academic staff, institutional leaders, and policy makers, emphasizing the need for strategic support and professional development to guide institutions through this shift.

The many possibilities introduced by GAI in education have generated concern and uncertainty among educators who are only beginning to comprehend its full scope and implications. Yet rather than viewing GAI as a threat, the book encourages a mindset of curiosity and collaboration, proposing a new teaching model that is human-centred and supported by AI.

A notable strength of the book is the author's selection of sources, which are relevant, current, and supported by research. Pratschke combines classic theories of digital pedagogy, such as constructivism, generative learning, and TPACK, with recent reports and policy documents from organizations such as UNESCO (2023) and the OECD (2023), which give the book theoretical depth and practical relevance. In addition, the inclusion of contemporary discussions of generative AI demonstrates that the author is keeping up with the field's fast-moving developments. However, while the sources are solid and diverse, the book relies mostly on commentary, reports, and conceptual papers. It would be stronger if it included more studies that show how generative AI is actually being used in classrooms and what effects it has on learning. Adding more empirical evidence in this area would make the book's arguments more convincing and give readers a clearer picture of the real-world impact of AI-supported teaching models.

In its conclusions, the book argues that generative AI will only make a real difference in education if it is accompanied by a deep rethinking of pedagogy, institutional systems, and teacher training. Pratschke explains that the goal is not to replace teachers with automated tools, but to redesign learning environments where AI supports human judgment, creativity, and inclusion. She also notes that institutions need to provide clear guidance and ethical standards so educators can use AI with

confidence and responsibility. Overall, the book presents GAI as a major change that will reshape educational practices in the long term. Finally, although the book includes illustrative case examples, it would benefit from more empirical research or systematic assessments of the outcomes associated with AI-integrated pedagogical models. Additionally, incorporating student perspectives and exploring how generative AI influences learner identity and engagement would have added further depth to the analysis.

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- If AI was used in the methodology, details on when and how it was used must be included.
- If chatbots or AI were used for analytical work or processes, this should be clearly indicated in the Methods section.

- Command/Prompt Declaration: In such cases, authors must specify all commands used to generate AI content, facilitating scientific scrutiny and ensuring the reproducibility of results.
- Declaration in Cases of AI-Assisted Research: If the use of AI is an integral part of the research design or methods, it must be declared in the Methods section, including a detailed description of the process and software used.
- This declaration must be made in every submission of the article.

Guidelines for Authors

GiST Journal ISSN (1692-5777) is a peer-reviewed journal published bi-annually by the *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana (ÚNICA)* in Bogotá, Colombia.

Content. GiST Journal disseminates the results of national and international studies in language education, particularly in bilingual education and language learning innovation. GiST addresses related topics including language policy, the relationship between language, culture, and society, the role of first and second languages, teaching methodologies, learning strategies, educational planning, and other topics related to language education.

Journal Aim. To disseminate the results of national and international research carried out in the field of language education, in particular bilingual education, as well as innovations in language teaching and learning.

Readership. GiST Journal is directed towards students, researchers, educators, policy makers, and other parties interested in the field of (or in fields related to) language education.

Periodicity. GiST is published in English bi-annually by ÚNICA, Bogotá Colombia. The January- June issue includes articles accepted from October to January of the year of the publication, and the July- December issue articles accepted from the previous April – July of the year of publication.

Submission of articles. Authors must submit documents exclusively and directly via the platform of Open Journal Systems (OJS). Users must register, and articles should be submitted by clicking on the link "online submissions." Submissions are received in the dates established and published by GIST. Submissions to GIST can be sent via: https://latinjournal.org/index.php/gist/issue/view/66

Documentation required. Additionally**,** authors must attach these documents via the OJS platform.

1. Letter addressed to the Editor of GiST Journal, requesting the evaluation of the article.
2. The Letter of Copyright Assignment Agreement and Conflict of Interest Statement, both signed by the author(s), verifying that the article is original, and that it has not been published or submitted to another journal for consideration. This format is available on GIST's page, in the Editorial section, also in the OJS platform.
3. CV for each author including studies, professional experience, current position, and institutional affiliation. In addition, each author's full name should be given in the order in which they wish to appear.

Article Presentation Format

Language. The article should be in English.

Tone. Articles should present scientific, scholarly, and professional research on language education. All biases towards gender, sexual orientation, racial, or ethnic groups should be avoided, as should all prejudiced statements involving disabilities or age. Historical and interpretative inaccuracies (quoting a work inappropriately) are not acceptable.

Length. At least 15 but no more than 25 pages.

Software. The article should be submitted in a recent version of Microsoft Word.

Style. Authors should follow *the* ***Publication Manual of the APA*** *(Seventh Edition, 2019) for writing style in gen*eral as well as references. Some key aspects of the general APA style include:

a. Using just one space, not two, between all words and sentences.
b. Using a ½ inch (five to seven space) indentation on every paragraph.
c. Placing reference citations within the text (and not as a footnote).
d. Spacing in-text references according to the example: (Johnson, 2003).
e. Keeping direct quotations to a minimum. When included, following the APA guidelines for short quotations (less than 40 words, identify the quotation with quotation marks as part of the main text format, and include the page number of the source), and long quotations (more than 40 words, use block paragraph format for the quotation and include the page number of the source).
f. Placing punctuation *within* quotation marks, according to the example: ...word."
g. Using the 12 point Times New Roman font, for readability.
h. Double-spacing the entire text.
i. Utilizing commas before the word *and* or *or* in a series of three or more items.
j. Using digits (e.g., 10; 78; 394) only for numbers 10 and above. Other numbers under 10 may be written out (e.g., four, nine, seven).
k. Differentiating in the format used with a *table* and a *figure* in the graphics which accompany one's article.
l. Implementing the editorial "we" or "I" (with the active voice), which is perfectly acceptable nowadays, and even preferred over the use of the passive voice.
m. Using the five levels of APA heading, (which are not to be numbered).

Although we encourage authors to use the reference lists of previously published GiST Journal articles as a model, seven general examples follow. Please notice that each reference includes the authors name, date of publication, title of the work, and publication data.

Martínez, A. A., Jones, B. B., & Schmidt, C. C. (1997). Título de artículo en español [Title of article translated into English]. *Name of Journal*, *8*(3), 492-518.

Chang, F. F., & Donovan, P. P. (Eds.). (1985). *Title of work*. Location: Publisher.

Martínez, A. A. (2009). Title of chapter. In E. E. Godoy (Ed.), *Title of book* (pp. xx-xx). Location: Publisher.

Martínez, A. A., & Jones, B. B. (2010). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, 24, pp. xx-xx. doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx

Martínez, A. A., & Jones, B. B. (2010). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, 24, pp. xx-xx. Retrieved from http://name.of.website

Chang, F. F (2000, July). *Title of paper or poster*. Paper or poster session presented at the meeting of Organization Name, Location.

Martínez, A. A. (2002, October 12). Title of article. *Name of Newspaper*, pp. B2, B6.

Graphic Aides. Original tables, figures, photographs, graphics, or other digital files which are necessary for comprehension are encouraged. Graphics should be original and may not be reproduced from copyrighted material. Graphics may be included in the text of the article in the place where they should appear. All figures and tables should be black and white.

Title. The article's title should be brief and allow readers to identify the topic and content easily.

Origin of the Article. It is necessary to specify if the article is the result of research, a graduation thesis, an essay, or critique. In the case of it being a product of a research project, the author should indicate the project title, the financing source, sponsoring institution, and project phase.

Abstract. All abstracts should be in English and in Spanish. The abstract should include the scope and intention of the paper, with a concise description of the methodology, supporting theories, general results, and main conclusions.

Keywords. There is a maximum of seven keywords, which must be presented in English as well as Spanish.

Types of Articles

1. **Scientific or technological research article:** A document which presents in detail the original results of a research project. The structure generally contains seven important sections: and abstract, an introduction, a review of the literature, the methodology, the outcomes, the conclusions, and a reference list.
2. **Reflective article:** A document which presents in detail the results of a research project from the analytical, interpretive, or critical perspective of the author, on a specific topic, with clear references to the original sources.
3. **Review Article:** A document which is the result of research in which the results of certain research projects which have or have not been published are analyzed, systematized, and integrated together with the objective of demonstrating advances and developmental tendencies. This type of manuscript is characterized by its presentation of a careful bibliographic summary of at least 50 references.

Peer Review Process

As GIST is a bi-annual publication, the Editorial Committee publishes two calls for papers, in approximately April and November of each year. GIST then receives submissions until the published deadline, and carries out the following process with each submission:

The Editor carries out a preliminary evaluation before assigning peer reviewers, with the purpose of verifying that the article complies with the established criteria and guidelines for presentation of articles. This revision is usually completed within a three-week period.

In the case of articles that do not comply with the standards for presentation, according to the specifications of the journal, the Editor requests that the authors adjust the article in order to prepare it to be reviewed by peer reviewers. Authors are given a two-week period to make the requested modifications, and re-send the manuscript again to the Editor for consideration. Once the Editor has verified that the article fits the standards of presentation and specifications of the journal, the process of peer review may begin.

The Editor informs authors of the decision to submit the article to peer review or not within one month.

Articles that fulfill the presentation requirements are submitted to anonymous, double-blind peer review by experts in the field. This means that authors do not know the identity of the reviewers, and vice versa.

The Editor, with the help of members of the Editorial Committee, assigns peer reviewers according to the specific topic of each article. The Editor then invites peers to conduct the review, and once these individuals accept, they are informed as to the procedure for accessing articles in the OJS. In this same message, reviewers are informed of the expected time period and proposed deadline for the review, approximately one month after a reviewer agrees to conduct the evaluation. It is the hope to always conduct the peer reviews in a timely fashion; nevertheless, adjustments may be made to ensure reviewers' participation.

In order to carry out the evaluation, peer reviewers complete the evaluation form, and in this way, recommend the article for publication or not as well as specifications for revision, if this is recommended. The results of this evaluation serve as input for the Editor and Editorial Committee to decide if the article is publishable, publishable with minor adjustments, publishable with major adjustments, or not publishable.

Once the evaluation is complete, the Editor communicates with the author(s) and informs them of the decision that has been made, indicating whether or not the article will continue in the revision process. Authors have a one-month period to adjust the article and send the revision once again to the Editor. The Editor then reviews the article and reaches the final decision as to whether the revised version will be accepted for publication, bearing in mind its revision according to the input received from the peer reviewers, and the Editor's own independent criteria.

The Editorial Committee will decide on the publication of an article according to the following criteria: the fulfillment of the above stated conditions, methodological and conceptual rigor, originality, scientific quality, and relevance.

If the article is accepted for publication, the Editor proceeds with the editing and proofreading process. Once the final version of the article is completed, it is sent to the author for final approval, and is then forwarded to the design team for its preparation.

Relinquishing of Rights and Distribution of Published Material

The publication of articles in GIST implies that authors relinquish all rights to the article and its content. Authors also authorize GIST to promote and distribute the article via the means it deems appropriate, be it in print or electronically. For this purpose, authors should sign and send both the letter of relinquishment, and the declaration of conflict of interest upon submission of the article. These formats are available in the OJS platform of the Journal.

Code of Ethics and Good Practices

The Editorial Committee of GiST Education and Learning Research Journal, as part of its commitment to the scientific community, strives to guarantee the ethics and quality of its articles. The publication takes the code of conduct and good practice of the Committee of Ethics in Publications (COPE) as its point of reference, which defines standards for editors of scientific journals, as well as the legal and ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA) in the sixth edition of its Style Manual.

All parties involved in the publication of the journal (Editor, Committees, Authors, and Peer Reviewers) must accept and adhere to the ethical guidelines and principles outlined here.

Editor Obligations and General Responsibilities

The Editor of the journal is responsible for ensuring strict compliance with the policies and principles of the journal. Specifically, the Editor is expected to act in an ethical manner in the following aspects:

Decision making. The Editor guides all decisions regarding articles submitted and published according to verifiable criteria of impartiality and fairness, taking into consideration the primary objectives of the journal.

The works submitted are evaluated objectively, based solely on the scientific merit of their content, without discrimination in regards to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic background, nationality or political persuasion.

Confidentiality. The Editor is committed to the principle of confidentiality and anonymity in communications between Editor and Authors, and Editor and Peer Evaluators. The Editor shall not disclose information related to the article or its process with third parties or colleagues not related to the journal, except in cases when an

expert opinion is required, and in which the express permission for this purpose is granted by the author(s). The Editor shall not use the results of research of articles not accepted for publication for his or her own benefit or that of others, except with express permission from the author(s).

Communication. The Editor shall receive and respond to complaints, petitions, and comments in a reasonable amount of time. This also applies to the publication of corrections or modifications stemming from the editing process of published articles.

Compliance. The Editor strives to comply with the editorial policies of the Journal, and the publication of each online and print issue according to its established publication schedule.

In the same fashion, to:

- Consult the opinion of the members of the Editorial Board and Committee.
- Generate initiatives of support and constantly improve editorial practices.
- Support initiatives to educate researchers on issues of publication ethics and other ethical aspects of the journal.
- Take responsibility for the process of all articles submitted to the Journal, and develop mechanisms of confidentiality and peer evaluation up to the point of publication or rejection by the journal.

Other principles to follow include:

Peer Review Process and Editorial Decisions. The decision to publish or not shall be established via the process of peer evaluation, according to the "double blind" method in order to guarantee that the evaluation process that is free of conflict of interest between the parties. This rigorous procedure allows peer reviewers to value the technical quality, originality, and scientific contribution of the articles, among other aspects, and at the same time provides authors with the means to improve the article. For this revision process, a sufficient number of peer reviewers will be provided, selected from qualified area experts, with the intention of allowing for a more critical, expert, and objective editorial decision- making process.

Editing and Publication Schedule. The Editor provides for the fulfillment of the editing and publication schedule of articles accepted for publication. Upon the publication of each issue, the Editor and the editorial team accept responsibility for the promotion and distribution of the journal to its readers, subscribers, authors, peer reviewers, and other organizations with whom the institution holds agreements, as well as the data bases and national and international indexing services.

General Editor Obligations and Responsibilities

Authors must present their articles in the link indicated on the OJS-web page, according to the guidelines for the presentation of articles established by the journal. Authors are responsible for the ideas expressed in the articles, and for the ethical appropriateness.

Originality, plagiarism and exclusivity. Authors must explicitly state that the article is original in its creation, and that every effort has been taken to respect the intellectual

property of those third parties cited within. Articles must not be reprints, nor published in other journals. Further, authors must declare that the findings are original in nature, that no plagiarism exists, nor distortion or manipulation of the facts.

Exclusivity. Articles submitted to the journal must not be simultaneously submitted to other publications.

Citations and references. Authors must ensure that they have received express permission for the use of material they do not own, including the reproduction of charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, photographs, etc. All sources must be cited appropriately, with complete references provided.

Authorship. Articles with more than one author should order authors' names in hierarchical fashion, indicating by this the degree of function, responsibility, and contribution to the article. By the same token, mention must be made to any individuals who have made significant scientific or intellectual contributions to the research, composition, and editing of the article.

Responsibility. All authors submitting articles must assume full responsibility for their work, and ensure that it presents an exhaustive review and discussion of the most recent and relevant literature.

Research ethics. Research studies must use methodology that ensures that subjects are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to those principles of the code of conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA), GIST highlights the following: discussion of the limitations of confidentiality and the safekeeping of the same, minimization of the intrusion and invasiveness in individuals' privacy, conservation of data and informed consent to research, record, or film. Further, the names of institutions or individuals should be avoided, even if the author has gained permission for their use. If their mention is considered necessary, the author must submit signed authorization for their inclusion. The names of the researchers and participants shall likewise be omitted from the article. It is suggested that authors use pseudonyms, for example in case studies.

Conflict of interest. The Editor shall not consider articles that possibly represent a real or potential conflict of interest, resulting from financial or other relationships of competition or collaboration between authors, companies, or institutions mentioned in the article.

Errors in articles published. Any error or imprecision shall be communicated by the editorial team, and the necessary corrections in the online version of the article made.

Obligations and General Responsibilities of Peer Reviewers:

In the revision process, peer reviewers shall adhere to the following principles:

Confidentiality. Peer reviewers shall not share any information with third parties related to the article or its publication process. In such case that an external opinion may be necessary, reviewers shall seek express written authorization from the Editor in Chief, explaining the reasons. By the same token, reviewers shall not use the content of non-published articles for their own benefit or that of others, except with the express

authorization of the authors. The violation of the principle of confidentiality constitutes bad practice by the reviewers.

Contribution to quality. Individuals who commit to evaluating articles submitted to the Journal shall carry out a critical revision, without bias, using clear, non-offensive language, with the intention of guaranteeing scientific and literary quality, according to the area of expertise.

Time management. Although the Journal has a maximum time allotted for the revision process, articles should be evaluated as soon as possible in the hopes of optimizing the revision and editing process. At the same time, peer reviewers who feel that they are unable to fulfill their function as evaluators, either because of lack of expertise, time or possible conflict of interest, shall communicate this immediately to the Editor or editorial team through regular channels.

Detection of errors and bad editorial practices. Reviewers shall pay particular attention to gaps in references to literature or authors that they feel need to be included. At the same time, if in the process of revision, it is possible to detect bad practices on the part of authors, peer reviewers are under the obligation to inform the Editor so that he or she may proceed in accordance with the ethical principles of the journal.

Additional Information

Concerns. Communicate with the Editor through e-mail or by telephone, please. Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, International: (57-1) 281-1777 ext. 1296; In Colombia: (05-1) 281-1777 ext.1296

Waiver. Every article shall be subject to the review of the Editorial Committee. The Editor reserves the right to make formal modifications to articles through the editing process.

Editorial Norms. The contents of the articles are the exclusive responsibility of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GiST or ÚNICA. Any article published in GiST may be quoted as long as the source is clearly referenced.

Correspondence. For contributions, subscriptions or journal exchanges please write to: GiST Journal, Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana ÚNICA, Calle 19 # 2A -49 Bogotá, Colombia. PBX: (57-1)2811777 email: gist@unica.edu.co http://www.unica.edu.co

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