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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear TESOLers & Educators,

We are delighted to announce the successful completion and publication of Vol. 4, No. 4 (2024) of the *International Journal of TESOL & Education*.

This issue, Le and Bui (2024) explore the professional identity construction of a pre-service EFL teacher through a narrative inquiry, focusing on personal, contextual, and social influences. The study examines the teacher's identity before and during a practicum in Vietnam, using interviews and teaching diaries. Findings highlight adaptability, empathy, and reflective practice as key in identity development. This work underscores the dynamic nature of teacher identity, offering valuable implications for teacher education programs to enhance practical, emotional, and ethical competencies in pre-service teachers.

Tran Quang Hai (2024) examines English causative constructions using Construction Grammar and Radical Construction Grammar frameworks. Analyzing 310 samples from various sources, the study investigates the structural and semantic aspects of causative constructions. Findings highlight their role in depicting physical, emotional, and mental state changes. The research enhances understanding of causative structures and provides insights into their cognitive and linguistic applications, contributing to theoretical linguistics and practical usage in education and communication.

Pham and Nguyen (2024) investigate the use of translanguaging in Vietnamese EFL classrooms through a mixed-method study involving 183 university students. The findings reveal positive student perceptions of translanguaging as a tool to enhance learning, confidence, and communication. Challenges include lingering concerns about its implications for linguistic proficiency. The study highlights translanguaging as an innovative pedagogical approach, advocating for structured frameworks and teacher training to optimize its application in multilingual learning environments.

Nguyen (2024) investigates the role of silence in EFL classrooms, challenging the traditional view that equates silence with disengagement. Through a mixed-methods study of 132 engineering students, findings reveal that silence often reflects cognitive engagement, such as idea formulation and reflection. Factors like language anxiety and fear of peer judgment contribute to silence. Recommendations include fostering a supportive environment and redefining classroom participation to include silent engagement. This research emphasizes the importance of nuanced interpretations of silence in educational contexts.

Céleste and Nsirim (2024) investigate English language anxiety among Francophone students in Cameroon studying Spanish and English at the University of Yaoundé I. Using mixed methods, they identify linguistic typology, limited input, and negative reactions as primary anxiety sources. Findings highlight the impact of anxiety on motivation, self-esteem, and learning behavior. The study recommends fostering positive attitudes, incorporating digital tools, and increasing English language exposure to alleviate anxiety and enhance language acquisition. This research provides actionable insights into the challenges of multilingual education in diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

Akter (2024) critically examines the Medium of Instruction (MoI) policies and practices in Bangladesh from primary to higher secondary education. Using a systematic literature review, the study reveals inconsistencies between policy and practice, with Bangla as the *de jure* language and English emerging as the *de facto* language. These disparities contribute to social, economic, and cultural inequalities, including linguistic barriers for ethnic minorities and economic advantages for English-medium students. The article emphasizes the need for inclusive MoI policies and improved English education to bridge these gaps, offering insights for policymakers and sociolinguists.

Sari (2024) investigates the use of AI language models for democratizing IELTS preparation, focusing on essay scoring accuracy compared to human examiners. Analyzing four tools—ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9.com, and Upscore.ai—findings reveal Upscore.ai as the most accurate, with a Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 0.5. While AI tools offer accessibility and cost benefits, they lack nuanced evaluation, underscoring the need for human oversight. The study highlights AI’s potential for affordable, scalable test preparation but emphasizes integrating AI with human feedback for comprehensive assessments.

Le (2024) conducts a contrastive analysis of similes with “dog” imagery in English and Vietnamese, exploring cultural and linguistic differences using Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory. Analyzing 21 similes from both languages, the study finds that English similes carry both positive (38%) and negative (62%) connotations, while Vietnamese similes are entirely negative (100%). This disparity reflects differing cultural attitudes toward dogs—companions in English culture and less positively viewed in Vietnamese traditions. The findings inform cross-cultural communication, language teaching, and translation practices.

This milestone would not have been possible without the exceptional efforts of our dedicated authors, the meticulous reviewers, and the tireless editorial staff. Their collective commitment and expertise have significantly contributed to the high quality and scholarly excellence of this issue.

- Authors: Thank you for your valuable contributions and for advancing the field of TESOL and education through your insightful research.
- Reviewers: We appreciate your thorough evaluations and constructive feedback, which have been instrumental in maintaining the integrity and rigor of our journal.
- Editorial Staff: Your unwavering support and efficient management have ensured the smooth production and dissemination of this issue.

We invite you to explore the latest research and discussions featured in this edition. Access the issue directly through the following DOI link: <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.2444>

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the International Journal of TESOL & Education. We look forward to bringing you more exceptional content in the future.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Warm regards,



Associate Professor Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho
Editor-in-chief
International Journal of TESOL & Education

From Imagination to Practice: Unravelling the Professional Identity of a Pre-service EFL Teacher

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

professional identity, identity construction, pre-service EFL teachers, professional identity development

This study uses a narrative inquiry method, focusing on the transformation journey of a pre-service EFL teacher named Brandon (pseudonym), to explore the complex process of professional identity construction and reconstruction for pre-service teachers to teach EFL from a teaching practicum. The study gathered information about critical events that shaped Brandon's professional identity through semi-structured interviews and diaries before and during his teaching practice. Using an innovative "story constellation" approach, the research creates a three-dimensional narrative, weaving together temporal, personal, social, and contextual aspects. This exploration of Brandon's journey illuminates the core tenets of effective language teaching, including adaptability, empathy, continuous learning, and a student-centred approach, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the (re)construction of EFL teachers' professional identities. This study widens knowledge of EFL teachers' pre-teaching professional experiences and offers important implications for teacher education programs.

Introduction

Pre-service EFL teachers' professional identity development is a crucial yet challenging process (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Acting as role models, teachers demonstrate vital characteristics such as humor, tolerance, trustworthiness, and honesty, as pointed out by various researchers (Bashir et al., 2014; Benekos, 2016; Tajeddin & Alemi, 2019; Ülaver & Veisson, 2015). Besides, educational programs, responsibility shifts, and interactions within schools are some variables that influence this emotional journey (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; González-Calvo & Arias-Carballal, 2017; Sutton et al., 2009). Many theories and frameworks have shed light on this identity development process, such as Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, Lave and Wenger's (1991) contextualization theory, Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, and Tillema's (2000) the model of teacher professional development.

Research on constructing teachers' professional identity is a global focus, particularly in second language teacher education (SLTE) (Ardi et al., 2023; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Solari & Martín Ortega, 2020). This study area is especially pertinent for pre-service EFL teachers transitioning from students to practitioners (Yazan, 2018). In Vietnam, English teacher education programs follow a standardized curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Training (2015). These programs cover general and specialized knowledge, including an 8-week, 5-credit teaching practicum. This practicum is crucial for training pre-service teachers, in which university lecturers and school teachers supervise them. During this period, they engage in instructional planning, lesson observations, lesson plan development, and independently teaching at least eight lessons. This hands-on experience is vital for enhancing their pedagogical skills, highlighting the importance of teaching practice in their education (Nguyen, 2014). This stage plays a significant role in influencing pre-service EFL teachers' career choices (Nguyen, 2014), prompting local studies to explore how contextual factors, mentorship, and personal experiences shape their professional identity (Le et al., 2023; Ly & Tran, 2019; Tran et al., 2022). Additionally, recent educational reforms in Vietnam have shifted English language education towards a student-centered approach and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Vu & Nguyen, 2021). These changes challenge pre-service EFL teachers as they adapt to real-world teaching environments through which their professional identity continues to evolve in response to reflective practice, feedback, and changes in educational contexts, reflecting the dynamic nature of the teaching profession.

Several studies have sought to determine the impact of specific contexts on professional identity transformation (Lomi & Mbato, 2020; Sardabi et al., 2018; Yuan & Liu, 2020). Recent studies have also focused on the challenges faced by novice teachers and their professional identity reconstruction (Fallah et al., 2021; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Trinh et al., 2022). These studies clarify the complexities of professional identity development among novice teachers in different contexts. They have gained valuable insights into constructing and reconstructing professional identity among pre-service EFL teachers by emphasizing the dynamic nature of identity transformation, the influence of specific teaching contexts, and the role of support systems. Their findings also provide valuable insights for both experienced teachers and novice teachers, guiding future English teachers' preparation and professional development, especially exploring various aspects of teacher identity, including its formation, characteristics, and dimensions. However, there remains a need to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and the specific experiences of pre-service EFL teachers during their teaching practicum. In Vietnam, more research is needed to focus explicitly on pre-service EFL teachers' experiences, interactions, and reflections before and during their teaching practicum and how these experiences contribute to developing their professional identity (Tran & Huynh, 2017; Ly & Tran, 2019). Therefore, this study addresses this research gap by conducting a narrative inquiry into a pre-service EFL teacher's professional identity construction and reconstruction in the Vietnamese context.

Literature Review

Teachers' professional identity

In education, the concept of professional identity comprises three key definitions: self-images nurtured by teachers (Knowles, 1992), the connection between teacher duties and identity

(Volkman, 1997), and values shaped by personal experiences (Tickle, 2000). Besides, Beijaard et al., (2000) describe it as a combination of subject matter, pedagogical, and didactical expertise, influencing behavior and roles in the classroom (Le, 2013; Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). Furthermore, Trinh et al. (2022) emphasize cognitive knowledge, self-awareness, and relationships, indicating what teachers find essential in their profession. Within this complex pattern of developmental processes, Thelen and Smith's (1994) Dynamic System Theory considers multiple emerging paths, which produce a broad spectrum of professional formations. Finally, Zhao et al. (2022) prove in their quantitative research methods that it also enables people to be grouped according to how far they perform the stated levels of professional identity to provide more details of the complex web of sometimes contextual influences that shape the educators' sense of self in the specified context of the educational setting.

Teachers' professional identity (re)construction

Teachers' professional identity, shaped by personal, social, and educational factors (Bressler & Rotter, 2017; Doğan & Erdiller Yatmaz, 2018), refers to their perceptions, roles, beliefs, and values in teaching. The construction process begins in pre-service education, involving coursework, practicum, and reflection (Beijaard et al., 2004). Then, novice teachers adapt their initial ideas during real classroom experiences, influenced by interactions with students, colleagues, and the community (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2010). With time and experience, professional identity is reconstructed through continuous reflection, professional development, and adapting to educational changes (Farrell, 2015). Additionally, external factors such as school culture and social norms influence teachers' identities, leading to adjustments in their teaching methods (Hofstede, 1980). Reflective activities such as journaling and peer collaboration are also crucial to this ongoing process (Schön, 1983).

Factors influencing identity formation

Various potential factors influencing pre-service EFL teachers' professional identity formation have been proven in the literature, such as positive language learning experiences and sociocultural influences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Darvin & Norton, 2015). Their identity is also molded in teacher training programs, impacted by curriculum, teaching methods, and mentorship (Day & Gu, 2010; Farrell, 2015). Cultural identities become distinct when these things change and grow (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Additionally, emphasis is placed on a shift from traditional instructional modes to modern pedagogy in language education to make it less passive and student-centered (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Student motivation and learning outcomes are enhanced through interactive activities, project-based learning, or technology integration. As a result, teacher education programs cultivate professional identity.

Furthermore, it is noted that adverse childhood experiences impact some of the career choices, including becoming a preschool teacher (Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014). Moreover, the alternative ways in which in-service teachers develop their identity include teaching experience, emotion, and mental health (Androusou & Tsafos, 2018; Li & Liu, 2021; Zhao et al., 2022). In comparison, the ecological system theory enlightens the factors that shape the teacher's identity (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). It provides knowledge about different aspects that influence their career paths, emphasizing the complexity of personal as well as social and environmental

narratives as they unfold in shaping and reshaping teachers' professional selves in time. In addition, there is another context: Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecological perspective framework. This model also comes with four parts of the metaphor of ecological units: actors, relationships, environment, structures, and process. It identifies the nuanced interdependence in EFL teachers' (re) professional identity construction.

Educational relationships and mentorship, which focus on the interaction processes between educators and learners in formal educational contexts, also stress the critical nature of positive education-related interactions for developing one's professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2000). Mentoring helps the pre-service teachers be guided and encouraged in teaching practices they intend to adopt and practice appropriate methods and disciplinary actions to enforce when teaching. These relational experiences contribute to professional identity development, indicating the sociology culture, which is part of the educational environments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2010).

Also, intrinsic motivation explores the internal drive and personal motivations that propel educators toward professional growth and development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation indicates how a sense of purpose, autonomy, and lifelong learning among educators is fostered, which is essential for sustained professional and identity development in teaching. The integration of intrinsic motivation enriches our understanding of how personal agency and self-determination contribute to the construction of teachers' professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Farrell, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

According to Gay (2021), educators should change their attitudes about multiculturalism to embrace it to ensure that teaching and learning occur in culturally responsive contexts. The incorporation of Multicultural Education, that is, multicultural content in the curriculum and a multicultural approach to teaching, will reduce discriminative practices. Further, quality care and development tailored to cultural interactions also focus on students of diverse origins to achieve culturally relevant learning; intercultural communication guarantees learner accomplishment parity. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must be as culturally responsive to ethnic diversity as K-12 classroom instruction.

Constructivism

The constructivist approach offers a valuable theoretical framework for teacher professional identity development. Constructivism posits that the learner constructs everything that one learns and knows from the lived experiences and interactions, hence the environment (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Concerning teacher identity, Miller (2012) points out that constructionist conceptions focus on individual experiences, reflective practice, and social interactions that bring about the conceptualization of teacher identity.

From a constructivist perspective, teachers' professional identities are not static but evolve through ongoing interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader educational community (Beijaard et al., 2004). Teachers construct understanding and develop their identities, reflect on their experiences, and modify their beliefs and practices based on these interactions. The constructivist approach emphasizes the importance of individual autonomy and context in

teachers' professional identity development.

Reflective Practice

Emphasizing the active role teachers play in constructing and reconstructing their professional identities through reflection and ongoing learning, reflective practices encourage teachers to critically examine their learning experiences, identifying areas in which they need to develop and refine their professional identity (Schön, 1983).

The constructivist approach (Brooks & Brooks, 1999) combined with reflective practice as a methodological approach provides a robust framework for understanding and examining teacher professional identity development (Schön, 1983).

Research Questions

This study explored a pre-service EFL teacher's professional identity construction and reconstruction before and during the teaching practicum. By employing the narrative inquiry method, the study sought to provide a nuanced, participant-centred, temporally sensitive, and constructivist approach to understanding Brandon's professional identity development as an EFL teacher. It attempted to address the following questions:

1. How did the participant construct his professional identity before the teaching practicum?
2. How did the participant reconstruct his professional identity during the teaching practicum?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at a large public university in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region. The English language teacher education program is one of the university's significant training programs. Brandon was in his final year of the program and participated in the teaching practicum at a high school in a rural area. This made him a typical participant within the study's target population, and his engagement in the program offered insights into the experiences and challenges faced by pre-service EFL teachers in the region. He had a very good ability at school and has not taken English language proficiency tests. Hailing from a modest background in a Mekong Delta province, he discovered his passion for teaching while enrolling in the program. Influenced by his parents and guided by his "Heart, Mind, and Authority" philosophy, he delved into his unique experiences before and during the teaching practicum. His philosophy provided the study with personal values and principles influencing his development as a future EFL teacher. Furthermore, this includes his travel from K12 schooling through a four-year English teacher education program at university and involvement in an English Language Teaching reform program at a high school where he taught during the teaching practicum. This is important because it demonstrates a variety of experiences that have influenced the formation of his professional identity. Due to his unique background, experience, philosophical orientation, and active participation in teaching, he is used as a case study to understand the

intricacies involved in professional identity development among pre-service EFL teachers in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. Therefore, this paper aligns with its research aims by examining how a pre-service EFL teacher constructs and reconstructs his professional identity in the context of English language teacher education in Vietnam.

Data collection & analysis

The research employed semi-structured interviews and teaching diaries for data collection. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for this study because they can capture personal experiences and perspectives, which align with narrative inquiry method. This approach allowed participants to share their unique stories and reflections, enhancing the authenticity of narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). These interviews were conducted both before and during the teaching practicum. Before the teaching practicum, the interview covered the participant's background, motivation, expectations, changes during teacher training, self-assessment, and anticipation for teaching practice. During the teaching practicum, the interview delved into the participant's experiences, reflections, and interactions during the teaching practicum, focusing on how these aspects have shaped and influenced his professional identity as an English teacher (See Appendices for interview questions).

Before the interviews, the participant received explanations of the research's aims and provided informed consent. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes, recorded using portable devices. Vietnamese was used during the interviews to cover the topic and allow flexibility for the participants. Besides, teaching diaries enhanced the study's validity through triangulation and allowed the real-time recording of reflections and experiences. Detailed instructions were provided to the participant on effectively documenting his experiences in the diaries, covering aspects such as lesson planning, classroom interactions, reflections, and mentor-teacher engagements. The participant was requested to maintain teaching diaries in Vietnamese for eight classes.

The research adopted the three-dimensional space narrative inquiry framework, focusing on interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). "Story constellations" contextualized experiences within diverse contexts, allowing for interpretation and reinterpretation over time. Narrative exemplars, presented as story fragments and woven into "story constellations," explored the formation of pre-service EFL teachers' professional identities (Craig & Olson, 2002; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Mishler, 1990).

Analytically, three techniques were employed including broadening, burrowing, and storying and re-storying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These transformed field texts into research texts, contextualizing practicum experiences within literature, examining emerging themes, and positioning evolving identities within professional trajectories. This original toolkit forms the basis for school-based inquiries (Craig, 2015). The analysis process encompassed transcription of interview data, construction of narrative texts, validation by the participant - sharing the narrative texts with the participant to ensure that they accurately reflect his experiences, coding, and categorization of recurring patterns and emerging themes across narratives (Luna-Reyes & Andersen, 2003). Data from teaching diaries and interviews were independently transcribed, coded, and then merged to identify convergences and divergences in Brandon's experiences.

Triangulation involved comparing themes in teaching diaries and interview data to validate findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of Brandon's professional identity (re)construction before and during the teaching practicum.

Findings

Before the Teaching Practicum

Before the teaching practicum, Brandon shared several critical events associated with his stories to live by (Figure 4.1). These events collectively illustrate the multifaceted process through which Brandon constructed his professional identity. Each aspect contributed to his evolving identity as an English teacher. Supporting evidence to further elaborate on each aspect of the story will be provided in line with this.

Early Experiences with English Learning

Brandon's early encounters with English learning in elementary school were uninspiring and lacked depth, leaving little impact on him. He expressed,

During primary school, the impression of a particular subject was quite novel as it was a foreign language. It felt more like an introduction and a means of getting acquainted, rather than leaving a strong impression. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Middle and high school saw a shift towards abstract learning, devoid of practical applications, making it difficult for him to engage with the subject. He said,

As I progressed to middle school and high school, I found that the subject became more academic and abstract. The textbooks and materials lacked practicality. (Brandon, Interview 1)

However, during university, Brandon's passion for English was ignited through diverse subjects, extracurricular activities, and practical experiences. Engaging in designing lesson plans and giving presentations allowed him to apply theoretical knowledge practically, enhancing his understanding. He shared,

When I entered university, I studied different subjects and took part in extracurricular activities. I participated in constructing critical response reports and giving presentations. In particular, I learned public speaking skills such as designing lesson plans or compiling exercises. These experiences provided practical exposure and sparked my interest. In terms of academic content, the depth of learning was greater compared to my years in middle school, high school, and primary school. (Brandon, Interview 1)

These experiences revealed the real-world relevance of English, transforming it from a mere academic subject to a gateway for communication, self-expression, and cultural exchange. This realization motivated Brandon to pursue a career as an English teacher, driven by his genuine passion for the language and his desire to inspire future students.

Influence of English Teachers

Throughout Brandon's educational journey, he encountered English teachers who tailored their teaching styles to suit students' developmental needs. In elementary school, teachers emphasized discipline and academic standards, laying the foundation for responsibility. He said,

Most teachers adhere to certain standards, but their management style can vary depending on the age group they teach. For example, in primary school, teachers tend to have stricter discipline in terms of academic etiquette and homework submission. (Interview 1)

In secondary school, teachers created a supportive, empathetic environment, fostering open communication and guiding students through adolescence challenges. He revealed,

In the secondary school, the management style remains somewhat similar because this stage coincides with the psychological development of adolescents. Therefore, teachers are meticulous in managing their students' learning process. Additionally, during class time, teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated. Apart from exercises in textbooks, they also provide additional materials for students to work on outside of the classroom. (Brandon, Interview 1)

High school teachers balanced strictness with flexibility, adjusting their approach based on students' performance. He shared,

But in high school, the amount of knowledge becomes more extensive, but teachers still maintain their standards in teaching. However, occasionally, they may be more lenient and less strict, without excessive difficulty. There can be some flexibility or adaptability based on the amount of knowledge and the specific situations and exercises in the lesson. Teachers may adjust their approach according to the students' performance and the nature of the tasks. (Brandon, Interview 1)

He added,

For example, in elementary school, teachers are fantastic in understanding the students' psychological needs. They are right in the sense that students always comply with their instructions. Additionally, teachers serve as ideal role models for students. (Brandon, Interview 1)

As for secondary school, there is a significant change in students' thinking due to the onset of adolescence. However, in general, teachers still maintain a strict approach in teaching. Regardless of the difficulties, teachers are dedicated and provide guidance. They may offer individual conversations to encourage students who are struggling in a particular subject. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Moving on to high school, there might be a slight relaxation because students are more mature at this stage. There is still some level of restraint, but it is not necessarily rigid. It could be more of advice-giving, and if students are unable to meet expectations, teachers might let them handle it on their own. (Brandon, Interview 1)

These interactions highlighted the importance of teachers understanding students' needs, adapting methods, and creating supportive environments.

Teaching Methods and Curriculum

Brandon observed a dominance of traditional teaching methods in his English education, characterized by teacher-led discussions and rote vocabulary learning. He revealed,

Most teachers taught using the traditional teaching method, where the percentage of teacher talk was typically around 70 to 80%. Throughout the lesson, the teacher played the roles of management, guidance, and correction, with a limited amount of student speaking time. (Brandon, Interview 1)

He advocated for interactive and communicative teaching techniques, emphasizing the importance of warm-up activities, games, and real-life situations to engage students. He added,

For example, back then, there was no teaching using modern textbooks or current teaching methods, which typically involve warm-up activities or games to introduce the lesson. Instead, teaching was often done directly. When it came to teaching vocabulary, most teachers would write words on the board and ask students about their meanings and parts of speech, then check and review them with the whole class. The vocabulary teaching method was quite limited compared to now. I believe it has changed because nowadays teachers use visual aids such as pictures or provide examples for different situations. They may even use puppets during speaking practice. Speaking practice itself was rare in my subject curriculum when I was studying. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Moreover, Brandon emphasized the need for more in-class speaking practice, proposing interactive activities like role-plays and group discussions. He said,

Even in middle school and high school, speaking practice was only conducted during oral exams or assessments. In those instances, teachers would provide instructions for students to study at home or give them the assignment along with some hints for them to work on independently. However, there were limited opportunities for in-class speaking practice, or if there were any, they were scarce within a particular lesson. (Brandon, Interview 1)

He stressed the need for more in-class speaking practice, proposing interactive activities like role-plays and group discussions to create a student-centered, communicative learning environment.

Personal Motivation and Professional Growth

Initially, Brandon's decision to study English lacked personal motivation, being primarily influenced by family encouragement and convenience due to its proximity to his home. He said,

It's not really about personal motivation because initially, I didn't have a specific direction for studying this field. I didn't even have a clear plan for pursuing higher education. However, partly due to my family's influence, I chose this field because it was conveniently located near my home, with a commute of about 40 minutes. Therefore, the motivation didn't originate from within me but rather from my family's encouragement to pursue education. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Reflecting on his journey, Brandon identified two distinct phases: the first encompassed the beginning of his university studies until the middle of his second year. In contrast, the second phase spanned from the middle of his second year until now.

In the first phase, he struggled due to a lack of interest, ineffective learning methods, and poor time management skills. His introverted nature posed challenges in communication-intensive activities required for English language teaching.

In the initial stage, I lacked motivation to study, and I was generally careless, not investing much effort into my studies. This was due to several reasons, including a lack of intrinsic motivation, the absence of effective study methods, poor time management skills, and my introverted nature. As a result, I had limited communication skills, which posed a challenge in this field of study that requires frequent group work, communication, and presentations. I struggled in these aspects. (Brandon, Interview 1)

However, a significant shift occurred in the second phase when specialized courses and practical teaching aspects ignited his genuine interest.

However, in the second stage, I gradually developed a strong interest in my studies. I had the opportunity to delve into specialized subjects such as vocabulary teaching methods, grammar instruction, and strategies for teaching the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Currently, I am still learning about English language teaching methods for young learners. In addition, I have the opportunity to study practical subjects such as instructional design, assessment and evaluation, and the psychology of English language learners. These subjects provide valuable insights into understanding the psychological nature of students in the classroom. It helps me address classroom challenges and guide students to achieve better learning outcomes. (Interview 1)

This transformation marked his professional growth, emphasizing the importance of personal motivation and continuous self-reflection in shaping his identity as a teacher.

Qualities of a Successful English Teacher

Brandon's initial perception of an ideal teacher emphasized fluency and effortless classroom management. However, practical experiences led him to value a teacher's strong foundation in knowledge, effective teaching methods, and understanding of classroom dynamics.

Talking about the initial model, I believe I would be the raw, unedited version of a teacher who is naturally skilled and capable of handling any classroom situation. This means being able to handle and resolve all classroom issues and effectively transmit the best information to students. It could simply be an excellent English teacher who speaks English fluently, like the wind. In Southern Vietnamese dialect, we say someone speaks English "like the wind." However, after gaining practical experience through internships and observing classes in various schools, I have come to realize that the important aspect of the teacher model has evolved significantly. A teacher should start from being "standard" meaning having a strong foundation of knowledge, along with good teaching methods and skills. They should also be able to grasp the classroom dynamics to adapt their teaching and handle pedagogical situations accordingly. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Before entering the teaching practicum, he pursued building the image of a teacher with three virtues: *Heart* (Tâm), *Mind* (Trí), and *Authority* (Uy). In terms of *Heart*, Brandon stressed the importance of genuine dedication, patience, and active listening. He believed teachers should provide accurate information, admit mistakes, and inspire students to learn. He aimed to make English accessible and engaging by nurturing students' passion for learning. Regarding *Mind*, Brandon emphasized the role of knowledge and wisdom in guiding students. He wanted to use his expertise to show that learning English is achievable. He valued educating students about the right learning methods and correcting misconceptions promptly.

I believe that teachers should possess professional ethics that are focused on the Heart (Tâm) and Mind (Trí) of the teacher. The Heart and Mind of a teacher require wholehearted dedication to teaching students. In particular, teachers need to have patience and actively listen to their students. Sometimes, we need to truly listen and take a step back to allow our students to open up to us. Our Heart can guide us to teach accurate and standardized knowledge. If we make pronunciation or vocabulary mistakes, we cannot hide them behind our professional facade. Instead, we need to correct ourselves promptly and provide accurate information to our students, as teachers are not just teaching one generation but many generations. If we teach inaccuracies, it will have a long-lasting negative impact. Secondly, the Heart and Mind of a teacher can also be seen as the ability to use our knowledge to inspire and ignite students' passion for learning. We use our genuine care and the wisdom we have gained to educate students, allowing them to realize that learning English is not excessively difficult. Furthermore, even if English is challenging, we, as teachers, are there to guide and provide students with the right learning methods. (Brandon, Interview 1)

Despite modern limitations on Authority (Uy), he believed it should be a blend of respect and trust earned through teaching practice, creating a motivating and respectful learning environment.

I think that the Authority of teachers in the present time is limited due to modern regulations that restrict the use of disciplinary measures. However, I still believe that teachers can hold students accountable and impose consequences if they make mistakes. Without proper guidance and strong discipline, it would be challenging to establish order and discipline in the classroom. Although the use of Authority should not exceed reasonable boundaries or go against ethical standards, it can be used to create a sense of responsibility and motivate students to learn. (Brandon, Interview 1)

These virtues shaped his professional identity, aspiring to create a positive and engaging learning environment for his students.

Significance of Psychological Understanding of language learners

Brandon's transformative experience in the English Psychology course, taught by Ms. Jenifer, deeply influenced his teaching perspective. Ms. Jenifer's enthusiasm, dedication, and thought-provoking methods inspired him. The course exposed him to the psychological aspects of language learning, sparking his interest in understanding diverse learners' responses to teaching techniques.

When it comes to the transformative experience of a particular subject, I think it would be the English Psychology course taught by Ms. Jenifer. After taking that course, the first thing that struck me was Ms. Jenifer herself. She brought a lot of enthusiasm to the learning process and showed great dedication in her teaching. Particularly, her instructional methods and the discussion exercises she provided were profound. The questions she posed were thought-provoking. Furthermore, studying the content of the course sparked a strong interest in me, especially in terms of self-enlightenment and discovering things that I hadn't learned before. It was a revelation to learn things that no one had previously shared with me. (Brandon, Interview 1)

This awareness led him to incorporate psychological insights into his teaching approach, creating a supportive learning environment tailored to students' individual psychological dynamics.

Especially when working on research papers about different learning profiles or exploring the blend of teaching and learning methods, I found those experiences to be incredibly practical. They made me truly aware of what I was doing and where I stood in terms of my own learning journey. Moreover, I discovered aspects of myself that I hadn't previously recognized. I believe that my most significant experience was taking the English Psychology course, as it allowed me to delve into the psychology of

language learners and gain a deeper understanding of their learning experiences. (Brandon, Interview 1)

This understanding shapes his professional identity, enabling him to deliver a more meaningful and effective learning experience for his students.

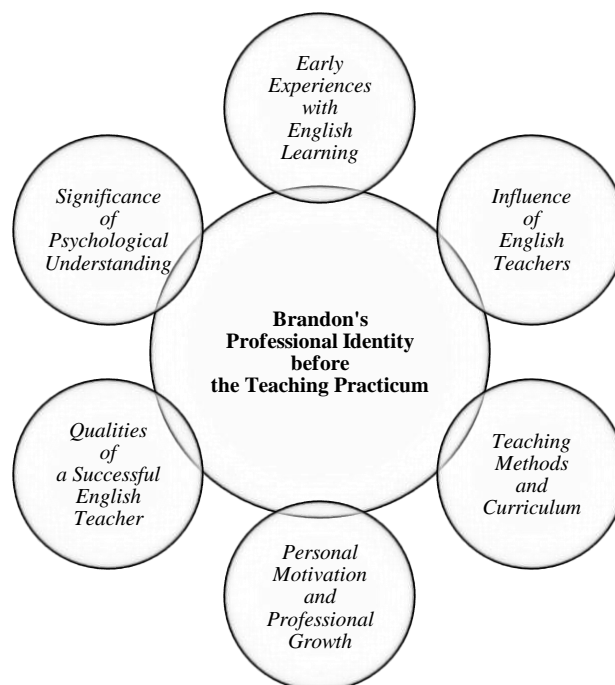


Figure 4.1 The major story threads underlying Brandon's professional identities

During the Teaching Practicum

Throughout his practicum, Brandon grappled with challenges related to lesson planning, classroom management, student behaviour, and developing a professional identity. In navigating these complexities, he demonstrated adaptability, empathy, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Brandon recounted several critical events associated with his stories to live by (Figure 4.2). Every aspect of Brandon's experience contributed to his development as an English teacher. Supporting evidence will be provided throughout this narrative to further elaborate on each aspect of his story.

Idealization versus Reality

Brandon's teaching practicum journey began with elaborate lesson plans that included various complex phases, emphasizing teamwork, presentation, and public speaking skills.

Before teaching practice, I set the goal of completing ideal lesson plans (including all pre-practice, practice, production, and consolidation parts), teaching consolidation by using real-life questions and scenarios. The production phase focuses on teaching teamwork skills and presenting in front of the class to build and guide students on teamwork, presentation skills, and public speaking skills. (Teaching Diary)

However, he encountered challenges when implementing these plans due to diverse student proficiency levels.

The most profound thing I realized throughout that teaching practicum process was how difficult it was to apply ideal lessons. A complete lesson with all the steps, highlighted and effective Production and Consolidation was challenging to students who had an average to intermediate English proficiency level. (Teaching Diary)

Recognizing the gap between his ideal plans and students' readiness, he adapted his approach.

Perhaps the ideal lesson plans are not suitable for the students. Full-featured lessons with various tasks often overwhelm them. Some students have never participated in lesson construction. There were very few raised hands. (Brandon, Teaching Diary)

He simplified lessons, focused on specific student needs, and tailored instruction accordingly. This shift reflected his adaptability, emphasizing the importance of understanding students' capabilities and adjusting teaching methods.

I realized that I can still apply ideal lesson plans by adapting them to the students' proficiency levels. Focus on improving weak areas and skills. It's unnecessary to have an extravagant Production part when the students are struggling with the Practice section. There's no need to compromise students' understanding for the sake of following the teaching plan or worrying about completing the curriculum. (Teaching Diary)

This newfound flexibility showcased his ability to adjust his teaching methods to suit the students' abilities and engagement levels.

An ideal lesson, a well-designed plan, is when the provided data helps students fill in their knowledge gaps and apply those skills to exercises. (Brandon, Teaching Diary)

This transformative experience shaped his identity, highlighting the significance of flexibility and practicality in effective teaching.

Adaptability and Flexibility

Brandon's teaching practicum experience was defined by his adaptability and flexibility in response to his students' needs and challenges. Brandon explained,

After the completion of the first lesson, I realized that my students were weak in speaking skills and lacked confidence in communication. They were hesitant to participate and reluctant to raise their hands (Brandon, Interview 2).

He recognised his students' weak speaking skills and lack of confidence and simplified his lesson plans, transforming tasks into discussions and warm-up activities to provide more practice opportunities.

I simplified my ideal lesson by transforming Task 1 into discussions or using it as a warm-up to save time, allowing me to focus on teaching other tasks such as Task 2, Task 3, and providing more practice opportunities for the students. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Additionally, he modified time-consuming assignments into multiple-choice formats to ease the process for students. He explained,

Some tasks required the students to search for and answer questions, and writing the answers sometimes consumed too much time and posed difficulties for the students. To address this, I modified it into a multiple-choice format, providing only three answer choices instead of four, making it easier for the students to complete. (Brandon, Interview 2).

Furthermore, open to feedback and collaboration, he sought opinions from others and proactively addressed unfamiliar situations. Brandon expressed,

I am open to seeking opinions from others. If I don't have any information or solution for a particular situation, I gather opinions first and then ask for assistance in finding a solution. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Regarding classroom management, Brandon exhibited adaptability by understanding cultural differences. He took the initiative to introduce himself, creating a positive atmosphere and bridging the gap between his students' shyness and his proactive approach. Brandon shared,

So there was no need to hesitate, I had to take the initiative and I could introduce myself first to make the students feel positive and energetic about my greetings, and then they would be more open to me because they were in a shy state, while I had to be proactive. (Brandon, Interview 2).

His ability to adjust his teaching methods and behaviour showcased his adaptability, fostering a supportive learning environment and contributing to his students' growth. These qualities were pivotal in shaping his professional identity as an educator.

Classroom Management and Student Behavior

Brandon demonstrated classroom management skills during his teaching practicum by handling a challenging situation with a rude student. He recognised the impact of his reactions on the classroom atmosphere, maintaining emotional control to prevent adverse effects on other students.

There was a day when a student talked rudely to me... I controlled myself and didn't yell at him because when we yell at a student in class, it deeply affects the pressure and psychology of other students. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Understanding the importance of students' backgrounds, he conducted research and gained insights from the homeroom teacher, allowing him to respond empathetically.

I did some practical research and asked the student's current homeroom teacher for information about this student's family circumstances. The teacher told me that the student has a difficult family situation, which might be why his behavior is sometimes not good. (Brandon, Interview 2)

While being friendly, Brandon maintained a professional distance to uphold standards.

Despite being friendly with students, there was still a certain distance. The distance between teachers and students was necessary. It had to be a professional standard. (Interview 2)

He actively sought engaging teaching methods, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to encourage student participation.

Even when I provide handouts and assignments, they still do not complete them. (Brandon, Interview 2)

To foster a positive classroom culture, he rewarded students' efforts, encouraging a solid study spirit. He shared,

In my homeroom sessions, I used to give two students a small gift to encourage their study spirit... It underscored the belief that all students deserved recognition, respect, and academic encouragement. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Additionally, he emphasized fair communication, ensuring every student felt valued and heard.

Students had the right to express their thoughts, their demands, their questions, and their difficulties... Their voices should have been treated equally in the classroom. (Brandon, Interview 2)

These strategies created a supportive, respectful, and engaging learning environment, reflecting Brandon's commitment to empathy, fairness, and inclusivity in his teaching approach.

Sympathy and Understanding

Reconsidering the situation in which a student behaved rudely to him, in another aspect, Brandon exemplified remarkable empathy and emotional control, refraining from reacting in anger and choosing silence to manage the situation.

When a student talked rudely to me. Honestly, at that moment, I was angry, but I controlled myself and didn't yell at him. Because when we yell at a student in class, it deeply affects the pressure and psychology of other students... To handle that situation, I chose to remain silent. At that time, I took deep breaths to regulate my breathing, and then I sat down and stared at that student... (Interview 2)

Brandon's calm response evoked a sense of fear and remorse in the student. Moreover, he delved into the student's family situation, offering compliments and advice.

I chose to give him compliments to make him feel that even though he was wrong, his apology was acknowledged... I advised him not to behave like that because it would have a more negative effect on himself than on others. (Interview 2)

This empathetic approach highlighted Brandon's genuine concern for the student's well-being and illustrated his dedication to supporting their personal growth.

Mentorship and Guidance

Brandon's teaching journey was profoundly shaped by his mentor teacher, who provided valuable insights into effective classroom management techniques. By closely observing and interacting with the mentor, Brandon learned when to adopt a broad overview and when to be strict in classroom management.

When I sat with my mentor teacher and observed, I learned the way he managed the classroom... I observed the attitude of my colleagues when they were teaching, and at that time, the teacher's demeanor became stricter to encourage better cooperation between the students and the teacher. (Brandon, Interview 2)

He absorbed the mentor's teaching philosophy, emphasizing clear expectations, explicit instructions, and a positive classroom environment.

I learned when to have a broad overview of the class and when to be strict. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Brandon actively implemented these strategies, showcasing his proactive approach to enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Through the mentorship, I have gained valuable insights into effective classroom management techniques... I have started implementing similar strategies, such as setting clear expectations, providing clear instructions, and establishing a positive classroom environment. (Brandon, Interview 2)

The mentor's influence became integral to Brandon's teaching identity, enabling him to navigate challenges and continuously evolve as an effective EFL teacher.

Peer Learning and Collaboration

From the beginning, Brandon valued peer learning and collaboration, actively seeking feedback and suggestions from colleagues on English assignments. He completed tasks and presented his ideas to colleagues, welcoming their feedback and corrections. Brandon mentioned,

I think that usually, in terms of interaction with colleagues in the same subject area, discussing English exercises, I would first complete the tasks myself. Then, I would present my ideas to my colleagues to receive their feedback, suggestions, and corrections. (Brandon, Interview 2).

His openness extended to attending colleagues' classes to acquire knowledge and skills related to teaching. Brandon explained,

I might request assistance from the subject teacher or mentor, as well as from colleagues, to attend classes that I haven't had the chance to teach yet, so that I can gather more information. Attending their classes allows me to acquire more knowledge and skills related to teaching various aspects of the lesson. (Brandon, Interview 2).

Brandon actively exchanged ideas and opinions with colleagues, especially in unfamiliar or challenging situations. He sought opinions and assistance, focusing on addressing pedagogical issues and minimizing negative impacts on students' morale. He stated,

I am open to seeking opinions from others. If I don't have any information or solution for a particular situation, I gather opinions first and then ask for assistance in finding a solution. Regarding colleagues in the same field, when working as class teachers, we often exchange information directly or through phone calls about the class situation. Especially in dealing with pedagogical situations, we focus on addressing those situations and minimizing any negative impact on students' morale. (Brandon, Interview 2).

His active involvement in collaborative processes showcased his dedication to continuous improvement and his belief in the power of collective expertise, contributing to a supportive community of teachers and fostering an environment of growth and improvement.

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusion

During his teaching practicum, Brandon consistently prioritized cultural sensitivity and inclusion. Despite his closeness in age to the students, he maintained a respectful atmosphere by correcting inappropriate forms of address, emphasizing proper language use and respect in student-teacher interactions.

In terms of age, well, I am not much older than the students... At the beginning, when I started teaching the class, the students would often address me as 'anh' (older brother), but at that moment, I would correct them and not allow them to use incorrect or inappropriate forms of address. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Additionally, he embraced an open-minded and inclusive approach, fostering a welcoming environment where students felt accepted and valued for their cultural identities.

I believe that as a foreign language teacher, it is important for me to be open-minded and comfortable in interacting with students more freely. I make sure to communicate with them regularly, even on a daily basis. For instance, before each class, I send them a message about what we'll be covering, the important points, and how to approach the topic. (Brandon, Interview 2).

He actively communicated with students, encouraging participation and ensuring equal treatment of voices, creating an inclusive space where diverse perspectives were respected and appreciated.

Students had the right to express their thoughts, demands, questions, and difficulties... Their voices should have been treated equally in the class. (Brandon, Interview 2)

Transformation of Beliefs

Brandon's core beliefs in Heart and Mind were reinforced during the teaching practicum, emphasising the importance of nurturing these aspects as an English teacher.

Previously, I mentioned three perspectives: Heart, Mind, and Authority. I believe that I can dedicate my efforts to nurturing and strengthening the first two perspectives, which are Heart and Mind. (Brandon, Interview 2)

However, his perspective on *Authority* underwent a significant transformation. Initially focused on rigid authority, he came to value *Perseverance*, representing resilience and adaptability in fulfilling teaching duties, structuring lessons, deepening knowledge, and handling unexpected challenges.

When it comes to Authority, I might not be able to fully embody it, and it has also undergone changes...through my teaching experiences,...Authority can be transformed into Perseverance. It refers to resilience. It is the resilience to fulfill teaching obligations, strive for well-structured lessons, enhance knowledge, and handle unexpected pedagogical situations. (Brandon, Interview 2).

This shift highlighted the significance of flexibility and continuous growth in his teaching philosophy.

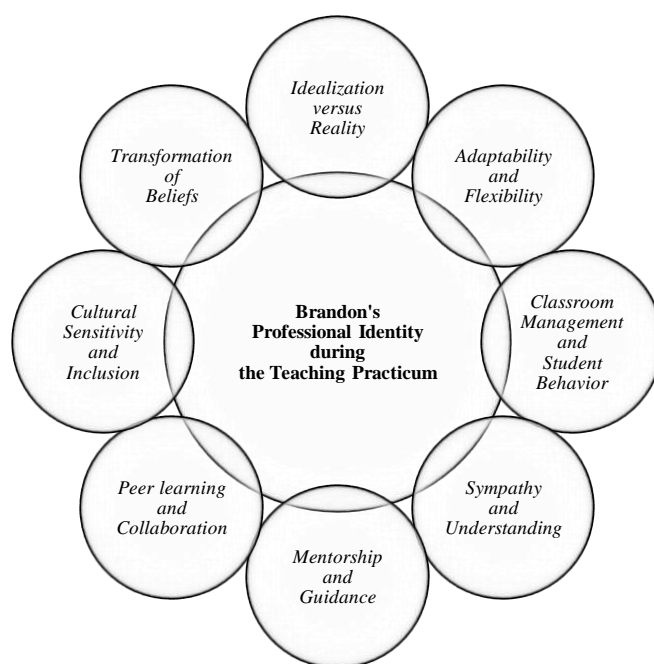


Figure 4.2 The major story threads underlying Brandon's professional identities

Discussion

This study explored a pre-service EFL teacher's professional identity (re)construction before and during the teaching practicum. Brandon's journey illustrates the significance of adaptability, empathy, continuous learning, and a student-centred approach to effective English language teaching. His experiences highlight the complexity of teaching and the constant evolution required to meet students' needs effectively.

From Influence to Passion: Imagined Professional Identity

Brandon's journey toward constructing his professional identity before the teaching practicum offers valuable insights into the pre-service EFL teachers' formative experiences. Before entering the teaching practicum, his professional identity development reflects a transformative journey influenced by intrinsic motivation, pedagogical adaptability, ethical considerations, and a commitment to student-centered education.

First, Brandon's initial lack of personal motivation emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in shaping teachers' professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). His change during his university studies, which resulted from the specialized courses and practical experiences, exemplifies the fluidity of the professional identity formation process, which is determined by internal processes and personal development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Vygotsky, 1989). Intrinsic motivation is one of the most important factors influencing the formation of professional identity, which provides them with purpose and commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Brandon's journey highlights the transformative potential of personal growth and intrinsic motivation in shaping effective educators prepared to meet the diverse demands of teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Second, Brandon's insistence on using interactive and communicative pedagogy aligns with current educational paradigms that call for active learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). This indicates pedagogical flexibility and sensitivity to the learning needs of other students because he focused on warm-up activities, games, and real-life scenarios. In essence, Brandon aims to follow the principles of a student-centered approach to learning and use various techniques that would allow him to involve as many students as possible and make the material more engaging by using elements of participation and practical application. This creates an active and effective learning environment that enhances his students learning (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Ly, 2024; Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

Additionally, Brandon's integration of ethical values - Heart (Tâm), Mind (Trí), and Authority (Uy) - into his professional identity emphasizes the importance of professional ethics and integrity in teaching. Ethical teaching practices embody principles and values that guide educators when interacting with students, colleagues, and the larger education community (Beijaard et al., 2000). His focus on ethical considerations shows the complex interplay between personal values and professional conduct. The emphasis on ethical consideration underlines the coincidence of his thoughts and deeds as a teacher (Tickle, 2000). Emphasizing ethical considerations, Brandon contributes to forming a solid professional identity with integrity, authenticity, and a deep sense of responsibility for students' learning and well-being.

Lastly, Brandon's transformative experience in the English Psychology course highlights the

significance of psychological awareness in adapting pedagogical practices effectively. Brandon is committed to student-centered pedagogy and personalized learning experiences by integrating psychological insights into his teaching approach. Personalized learning approaches stress that psychological understanding should be integrated into tailoring educational interventions according to the characteristics of individual learners (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Moreover, leveraging psychological insights allows Brandon to increase student engagement and learning outcomes by aligning instructional methods with individual learning preferences and cognitive processes (Schön, 1983; Trinh et al., 2022). He pays excellent emphasis to psychological awareness; when coupled with adaptive teaching practice responding to learner dynamics and academic challenges, it forms a vital armament. Brandon's profound grasp of learners' psychological dynamics finds resonance with the principles of Dynamic System Theory, a paradigm that recognizes the diverse growth patterns leading to varied professional identities (Thelen & Smith, 1994).

Evidently, the impact of the experiences from K12 schooling to the teacher education program on Brandon's professional identity was significant. A student-centered approach, intrinsic motivation, integration of psychological insights, and a commitment to adaptability and continuous growth characterized it. His narrative reflects a deep sense of purpose and dedication to creating engaging and supportive learning environments, driven by a passion for empowering learners through effective and meaningful teaching practices.

From Theory to Practice: Dynamic Growth in the Teaching Profession

Brandon's experiences demonstrated a transformative journey in his evolution as an English teacher during the teaching practicum. First, Brandon's immersion in authentic teaching settings during the practicum corresponds with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory. This theory explains that the learning process is converted into concrete experiences. By actively participating in teaching activities such as managing the classroom, lesson planning, delivering instructions, and interacting with students, Brandon employed theoretical knowledge in practical settings, facilitating the integration of teaching norms and values into his professional identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing the importance of social interactions and mentorship in shaping professional development.

Second, Brandon's adoption of reflective practice aligns with Schön's (1983) Theory of Reflective Learning, emphasizing critical self-assessment and adaptation in professional development. Brandon is committed to continuous improvement by evaluating teaching strategies and adjusting approaches based on student needs and feedback (Schön, 1983). Besides, Tillema's (2000) framework of reflective teaching further emphasizes the integration of personal beliefs with pedagogical practice for effective professional development, highlighting the transformative potential of reflective learning in shaping professional identity.

Next, Trinh et al. (2022) highlight that teaching is a highly dynamic process and the importance of adaptability in responding to diverse classroom challenges. Brandon's capacity to modify instructional methods, accommodate varying student proficiency levels, and foster inclusive environments reflects an understanding of the multifaceted demands of teaching. This adaptive

approach resonates with contemporary educational paradigms emphasizing flexibility and responsiveness to student needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012), highlighting Brandon's capacity to navigate complex educational contexts.

Additionally, Brandon's inclusion into the teaching community facilitates knowledge exchange and group problem-solving through cooperative contacts with mentors and colleagues. In line with Moss and Pittaway's (2013) social learning framework for professional contexts, this highlights the critical role that mentoring plays in forming teachers' professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2000) and the significance of collaborative relationships in teacher development and professional identity construction and reconstruction (Nguyen & Truong, 2021).

Furthermore, Brandon's proactive attempts to recognize and accommodate cultural variations are consistent with modern viewpoints on culturally sensitive teaching (Gay, 2021). Brandon has a dedication to establishing inclusive learning environments by promoting fairness and respect in the classroom (Darvin & Norton, 2015). This demonstrates Brandon's commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion and is consistent with contemporary frameworks highlighting the significance of cultural competency and responsiveness in educational practice (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Last, Brandon's shift towards emphasizing perseverance and adaptability over rigid authority reflects Beauchamp and Thomas's (2009) framework of evolving teaching philosophies. His life-changing event demonstrated his willingness to adapt and dedication to ongoing professional development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). This is consistent with current viewpoints on the development of teachers, which highlight the fluidity of teaching beliefs and values and the significance of reflective adaptation to changing educational environments (Day, 1999).

Observably, Brandon reconstructed his professional identity during the teaching practicum through engagement, real-world teaching experiences, and self-reflection. It was distinguished by flexibility, knowledge application in the real world, introspective practice, and reaction to obstacles in the classroom. His experiences demonstrate the intricate interactions that occur when theoretical knowledge, real-world application, cultural immersion, and ongoing development are all part of developing into an efficient and sympathetic English language teacher. His journey provides insights into the complex influences forming teachers' professional identities by highlighting the dynamic interplay of social, environmental, and personal aspects, reflecting the ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

Conclusion and Implications

This study explored a pre-service EFL teacher's professional identity (re)construction before and during the teaching practicum. It is evident that Brandon's path reflects the complex process of developing a professional identity in teaching, which is defined by flexibility, knowledge application in the real world, reflective practice, and responsiveness to problems in the classroom. Brandon embodies the attributes of an effective and compassionate English language educator by embracing ongoing improvement and upholding the principles of student-centered education and cultural responsiveness.

His experience has essential ramifications for programs that support teacher development and education. First, Brandon's development emphasizes how crucial comprehensive teacher preparation programs are. In addition to teaching pedagogy, educational institutions should emphasize developing students' social, emotional, and reflective abilities. This all-encompassing strategy guarantees that aspiring teachers will be resilient and confident enough to navigate the challenges of the teaching profession. Second, discussing the long-term effects of solid teacher-student connections on the educational environment is essential. These relationships are the cornerstones of healthy learning environments; institutions must promote and foster them actively. Building these relationships that promote trust and involvement in the classroom is made possible by mentoring programs, which are especially created to support empathic teaching techniques (Nickel & Zimmer, 2019).

Next, the adept use of reflective practices during Brandon's teaching practicum emphasizes their pivotal role in professional development. Teacher education programs should seamlessly integrate reflective activities, discussions, and critical evaluations into their curriculum. Reflection empowers educators to meticulously analyze their teaching methods, identify areas for improvement, and adapt to the diverse challenges of modern classrooms. By embracing reflective practices, educators can continuously refine their teaching approaches, ensuring an adaptive and effective pedagogy (Bleach, 2014). Besides, Brandon's ability to adapt his teaching methods and navigate challenges underscores the importance of adaptability and resilience in the teaching profession. Teacher training programs should incorporate realistic scenarios and simulations, exposing future educators to various teaching challenges. This exposure equips them with the skills and mindset necessary to respond adeptly, ensuring effective teaching even in the face of formidable circumstances.

Additionally, Brandon's experiences mentoring teachers highlight tailored mentoring programs' critical role. Individual mentoring profoundly affects pre-service teachers, providing them with a practical perspective and developing their natural enthusiasm for learning. Such individual mentoring contributes significantly to a successful transition from imagined to practiced identity, building confidence and competence in novice teachers (Trinh et al., 2022). Moreover, professional development is central and essential for teachers' careers (Yaremko et al., 2019). Brandon's journey highlights the constant nature of professional development. Therefore, educational institutions must be open to ongoing learning and reflection throughout teachers' careers. It ensures that teachers remain at the forefront of developing teaching strategies and teaching methods through opportunities to engage in vibrant communities, attend workshops, and gain advanced qualifications. Continuous professional development is the intersection of creating a dynamic and continuously improving educational environment.

Finally, Brandon's transformative shift from disinterest to fervent dedication underscores the profound impact of intrinsic motivation in the teaching profession. Educational institutions should prioritize the cultivation of intrinsic motivation among pre-service teachers. Passionate educators, driven by internal enthusiasm, are more inclined to invest in continuous learning and development. This intrinsic motivation not only enriches the educators' professional lives but also enhances the overall quality of education, fostering an inspiring and engaging learning environment (Paulick et al., 2013; Dao, 2021).

Limitations and Further Recommendations

The study focuses on Vietnam, which may limit its usefulness in other countries or educational systems. Cultural and educational differences can significantly affect pre-service teachers' experiences. Therefore, applying these findings elsewhere requires caution. Second, teaching diaries are the only triangulating source, which might need more robust supporting evidence due to time constraints and pre-service EFL teachers' busy schedules during the teaching practicum.

After acknowledging the limitations of this study, some aspects of the future research directions were proposed. First, future research could improve pre-service teachers' use of teaching diaries. Researchers could offer teachers specific prompts or templates to encourage deeper reflection on their experiences and emotions throughout their practicum. Second, researchers need to compare experiences of pre-service teachers from different regions and countries. This would reveal similarities and differences, leading to a better understanding of how culture shapes their practicum experiences.

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Biodata

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Appendix 1 – Interview Protocol

Round 1 interview questions

A. Personal background, and motivation for learning and becoming an English teacher

1. When did you start learning English?
2. Did you enjoy the English program during your K12-schooling years?
3. How do you feel about the English teachers who taught you? Their style, personality, teaching methods, and English proficiency?
4. What motivated you to choose to become an English teacher?

B. Expectations and changes during the teacher training program

5. Based on your experiences from learning English until entering the English teacher training program, what qualities do you think you will possess as an English teacher?
6. What are your expectations before entering the teacher training program?
7. Has the program met your expectations so far compared to what you anticipated?
8. Did you face any challenges during the learning process, and how did they impact your perception of the teaching profession?

C. Self-assessment and expectations for teaching practice

9. In your opinion, what qualities does an English teacher need to have?
10. Have your thoughts about the qualities of an English teacher changed from the beginning of the program until now? If so, how?

11. As you're about to experience teaching in a real school environment for two months, what kind of teacher do you think you will be in front of the class?
12. How do you assess your English proficiency and your teaching methods?
13. What do you expect from the upcoming teaching practice program?

Round 2 interview questions

A. Initial beliefs, teaching experience, and professional identity

1. Did your teaching practicum experience reinforce your initial beliefs about becoming an English teacher? If so, how? If not, why?
2. Can you describe a specific case during the teaching practicum where you felt your professional identity was challenged? How did you react in that situation?
3. Were there any particular aspects of teaching or classroom management during the internship that you found particularly challenging? How did you handle those challenges? How did they affect your professional identity?
4. How did you adapt to this practicum environment? How did this experience impact the formation of your professional identity?
5. Were there any other factors that influenced/contributed to the formation/strengthening of your professional identity? Can you describe them in detail?

B. Interactions and feedback during the teaching internship

6. During the teaching practicum, did you often interact with your mentor teachers regarding various professional aspects? Can you provide some examples of these interactions? How did they influence your professional identity?
7. Did you receive feedback from your mentor teachers? How did this feedback contribute to shaping/improving your professional identity?
8. Regarding interactions with colleagues, do you often exchange ideas or seek advice on various professional aspects or handling situations that occur in the classroom? How does this impact your professional identity?
9. Were there any skills or knowledge from university that were not suitable for real-world English teaching? How did you address these differences? How did these experiences impact your professional identity?

C. Teaching style, expectations, and self-reflection

10. How do you manage difficult situations and challenges in the classroom while maintaining professionalism?
11. Have you built relationships with students and their families? If so, how? How do these relationships influence your professional identity?
12. Were there any expectations or standards set by the school or teaching program during your internship? How did you balance your teaching style and beliefs with these expectations and standards? How did this shape your professional identity?

Appendix 2 – Teaching Diary

GRADE 10 ENGLISH – GLOBAL SUCCESS – VOLUME 2

1. Completed Lesson: Reading – Unit 8

Task: Skim & Scan

Objective: Guide and help students become familiar with Skim & Scan techniques

Result: Achieved

The teaching session was successful, but since it was the first practice session, there was still some hesitation and lack of understanding about the overall class situation, as well as the weak areas and skills of the students.

Teaching Method: Chalkboard (no PowerPoint slides) with the purpose of making students feel more engaged as most of them are used to chalkboard teaching.

Personal Reflection: Although the lesson was completed on schedule, I didn't succeed in motivating the students to actively participate; they still showed hesitation, and very few of them raised their hands to participate.

I communicated with the students through Zalo after the lesson, answering their questions and guiding them.

2. Completed Lesson: Listening – Unit 8

Even though the lesson plan was not fully executed, I consider the teaching session as complete since the main goal was to help students practice Listening and Filling in the blanks.

Result: Most students understood the task and more of them participated by raising their hands to answer questions compared to the first lesson. I personally felt very pleased with my efforts and the response from the students. I will correct the assignment and provide feedback to the students in the next lesson.

Experience from the previous lesson: Prepare and use electronic lesson plans and handouts.

3. Completed Lesson: Writing – Unit 8

Objective: Review paragraph structure and help students write a paragraph.

Result: Achieved, but the students remained passive, and the group work spirit was not evident.

Personal Reflection:

Despite thorough lesson preparation, I couldn't ignite the students' enthusiasm for learning due to the complexity of writing skills, which require a lot of vocabulary and language proficiency. Moreover, the English level of the students is moderate to average, and English is not their strength.

Approach to addressing the issue:

After class: I contacted and guided students through Zalo, explaining the format and outline of a paragraph.

4. Completed Lessons: Communication and Culture

CLIL: Unit 8

Getting Started: Unit 9

Language: Unit 9

Speaking: Unit 9

CLIL: Unit 9

Everything proceeded as planned, but I still couldn't motivate the students even after trying various methods, including teaching through translations.

Perhaps the ideal lesson plans are not suitable for the students. Full-featured lessons with various tasks often overwhelm them. Some students have never participated in lesson construction. There were very few raised hands. I realize that it's challenging to apply an ideal lesson plan to a class with a moderate to average English level and lacking motivation.

REFLECTION

Before teaching

Before teaching practice, I set the goal of completing ideal lesson plans (including all pre-practice, practice, production, and consolidation parts), teaching consolidation by using real-life questions and scenarios. The production phase focuses on teaching teamwork skills and presenting in front of the class to build and guide students on teamwork, presentation skills, and public speaking skills.

I still believe in the teaching principles of "Heart, Mind, and Authority" in my professional teaching and students' consciousness. Many students haven't found effective learning methods, and they often feel demotivated during the learning process. I believe I can bring a new perspective to English lessons, making them more positive and engaging.

During teaching

The most profound thing I realized throughout that teaching practicum process was how difficult it was to apply ideal lessons. A complete lesson with all the steps, highlighted and effective Production and Consolidation, was challenging to students who had an average to intermediate English proficiency level.

Personal experiences

During the first lesson, I aimed to make students feel at ease and get used to my teaching style. However, despite using traditional teaching methods like writing on the board, most students were still hesitant, especially when learning vocabulary in a traditional way. Teaching vocabulary through pictures, synonyms, and antonyms confused them, showing their lack of comprehension. In summary, students neither understood nor listened to what I was trying to convey.

I started to change my lesson planning and vocabulary teaching approach. I switched to using electronic lesson plans and taught vocabulary through pictures, synonyms, or antonyms, but they were related to the recently taught words, e.g., "Upload" >< "Download." Additionally, I redesigned exercises in the Practice section from original "Answer the questions" to "Multiple choices." I taught students how to read quickly, identify main ideas and details, and practice listening by filling in the blanks. Furthermore, I used a shaker to practice pronunciation and intonation, which made the classroom lively due to the students' curiosity. However, when it came to co-planning the lessons, they still remained passive.

These events greatly influenced my teaching process and my perspective on applying "Heart, Mind, and Authority" in students' education. These experiences deeply impacted my outlook on life, education, cognition, and the learning process. Despite this, I still believe in my principles and my teaching approach and remain determined to maintain and enhance "Heart, Mind, and Authority" or, alternatively, "Heart, Mind, and Persistence" depending on the situation and students' psychological understanding.

I realized that I can still apply ideal lesson plans by adapting them to the students' proficiency levels. Focus on improving weak areas and skills. It's unnecessary to have an extravagant Production part when the students are struggling with the Practice section. There's no need to compromise students' understanding for the sake of following the teaching plan or worrying about completing the curriculum. An ideal lesson, a well-designed plan, is when the provided data helps students fill in their knowledge gaps and apply those skills to exercises. At least they shouldn't sit there trying to copy the lesson, as I teach too quickly to finish the lesson on time.

Moreover, teachers need to inspire students. Use sincerity, knowledge, and authority to teach and advise students. Teachers should not only teach academic knowledge but also impart life skills to students, making knowledge practical and enhancing students' moral values, as "learning must be accompanied by practice."

Analysis of State Changes in English Causative Constructions: Insights from Construction Grammar


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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore how English causative constructions convey changes in state, using the frameworks of Construction Grammar and Radical Construction Grammar. The 310 English language samples were selected based on their relevance to illustrating transitions caused by internal or external factors, sourced from reliable texts, diverse contexts, varied grammatical constructions, and common usage patterns. Through a thorough examination of syntax and semantics, the study aims to illustrate how causative constructions effectively capture dynamic processes and cognitive perceptions. Emphasis is placed on the roles of the agent and patient, with the analysis seeking to uncover how these structures deal with causality and, crucially, changes in state. The findings show that causative structures in English mainly depict physical changes, although there is still a significant representation of emotional and mental changes. This analysis reveals the universal and language-specific aspects of causative constructions and provides insights into how they are used in everyday conversations and cognitive activities.

Keywords: Causative Constructions, Change-of-State, Construction Grammar, Cognitive Processes

Introduction

In the field of linguistics, the analysis of causative constructions is crucial due to their capacity to depict scenarios where the state of an entity is modified (Croft & Vigus, 2020). Building on the theoretical foundations of Cognitive Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995) and Radical Construction Grammar (Croft, 2001), this paper examines the similarities and differences in English causative constructions, contributing to understanding how language represents connections between actions and state changes. Beyond these foundational works, other scholars have made significant contributions to this area: Talmy (2000) explored cognitive semantics and force dynamics; Shibatani (1976, 2002) provided insights into direct and indirect causation across languages; Comrie (1974) offered a typological perspective on causative patterns; Hopper and Thompson (1980) analyzed the relationship between transitivity and causativity; Song (1996) conducted a cross-linguistic survey of causative expressions; Levin

and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 2005) studied argument structure and verb classification; and Givón (2001) examined causation's role in discourse. Building on the principles of Construction Grammar, the study of spatial prepositions like "towards" illustrates how constructions maintain their inherent meanings while also developing a diverse set of interpretations, both spatial and non-spatial, through polysemy; this reflects the complex cognitive processes by which individuals construct and re-evaluate conceptual frameworks within linguistic expressions, highlighting the dynamic interplay between form, meaning, and context in language use, which is essential for applications in translation, artificial intelligence, and specialized language contexts (Le, 2024).

Together, these studies underscore the complexity and diversity of causative constructions, enhancing our understanding of their grammatical and semantic properties in English and across languages. The study examined three main aspects: the structural and conceptual basis of causative constructions related to change of state, their use in everyday communication, and their cognitive impact. The results will improve our understanding of English constructions and shed light on how causative relationships can be expressed globally through a broader approach than Construction Grammar.

Literature Review

Causative constructions in the English language have received considerable attention in the field of linguistics, particularly when viewed through the lenses of Construction Grammar (Mbae, 2020), which brings together significant strides made toward understanding these constructions. Several primary theories underlie the study of causatives and help shape such investigations, including Cognitive Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995), which focuses on the relationship between form and meaning in language, and Radical Construction Grammar (Croft, 2001), which examines different models of causation across languages. These theories provide a framework for analyzing how English employs causative constructions to convey changes of state and the specific grammatical and semantic properties associated with them.

Foundational Theories in Construction Grammar

Fillmore (1968) introduced Case Grammar Theory, a groundbreaking concept in linguistics that went beyond surface structure to explore "meaningful relationships" within sentences. His recognition that different linguistic expressions can convey the same meaning opened new horizons for the study of language. While Case Grammar has faced criticisms for its lack of specificity and difficulty in distinguishing deep cases, it has remained influential in contemporary linguistic theories and computational linguistics by providing a framework for understanding semantic roles, which has informed recent research in natural language processing (NLP), argument structure, and syntactic parsing. These areas utilize Case Grammar's principles to develop more sophisticated models for understanding and generating human language, demonstrating its continued relevance and impact on linguistic research and technology.

The book by Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* (1987), was seen as revolutionary. According to the framework he conceived, all perspectives are symptomatic of the importance of schemas and categories in creating meaning. This increases the difficulty of typicalizing the fixed order within linguistic distinctions because his priority is the association between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics based on real-world usage. As a result, Cognitive Grammar advocates that language is a dynamic system that affects the user's mental representation of the world. This groundbreaking approach altered our understanding of language and had significant

consequences in other disciplines.

The prominent article by Adele Goldberg titled “Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to the Analysis of Argument Structures” (1995, 2003) presents strong arguments for why the study of constructions is crucial for decoding the intricacies of language and extracting meaning. She argues that grammatical meaning is intertwined with lexical meaning, leading to what she terms semantic indeterminacy in constructing sentences. According to her perspective, this indeterminacy allows for the creative use of metaphors in language, where speakers rely on context and shared knowledge to interpret the intended meaning behind an utterance rather than parsing sentences word by word. This view suggests that language users' understanding of action is fundamentally based on how language operates within the context of a previous utterance.

William Croft's *Radical Construction Grammar* (2001) further explains how English employs syntax to communicate cause and effect, facilitating progressive communication activities.

In other words, the theory assumes that language structure is a cognitive product that is flexible and adaptive. Understanding some of the fundamental principles English uses to depict causation requires this approach. Due to historical development, speakers find themselves with cascading sequences whereby syntactic patterns heavily imitate cognitive processes through their semantic and pragmatic elements. In fact, Croft's work presents causative expressions as a construction interwoven with many other elements to paint a vivid picture of the complex relationship between language and cognition. At the same time, the role of grammar cannot be ignored. This work clarifies many theoretical issues in linguistics and promises to bring applications to the pedagogical scope of language.

Goldberg's (1995) and Croft's (2001) theories form the foundation of this study, which seeks to explore the complexities of causative constructions. For example, Jayeola (2020) and Middeke (2021) noted that single-agent causative constructions could lead to multiple state changes, both physical and emotional, demonstrating the role of language in conveying nuanced transitions. Rappaport (2020) and Flach (2021) further highlight how multi-agent constructions depict the complexity of interactions among multiple participants, aligning with the observations made by Nash (2020) and Mangialavori Rasia and Ausensi (2020) regarding internal causative constructions that depict changes occurring independently within agents.

Building on these foundational insights, this study incorporates the work of Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2020), who emphasized that causative constructions often denote change, combining syntactic and semantic analysis to deepen our understanding of how language expresses dynamic relationships. By adopting a holistic perspective that integrates these theories, the current research aims to address gaps identified in previous studies, providing a more comprehensive description of how causative constructions function within the English language system. Consistent with the literature on Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995; Croft, 2001), which highlights the fluid relationship between form and meaning, the English preposition "into," much like "towards," demonstrates flexibility by expressing both spatial and non-spatial meanings depending on contextual cues. This adaptability underscores how language users leverage constructions to navigate and interpret diverse communicative contexts, illustrating the dynamic nature of meaning-making processes in line with cognitive-linguistic principles (Le, 2024).

A thorough grasp of English causative constructions is obtained through a blend of Goldberg and Croft's theories, revealing their involvement in action and change at a cognitive level. This theoretical base sets the stage for delving into causal structures within English settings as it

seeks to unearth the role played by such structures in mediating intricate relational dynamics. Building on these foundational insights, the subsequent sections will explore specific examples of causative constructions in English, highlighting their syntactic patterns, semantic roles, and the cognitive mechanisms that underlie their use in various contexts.

Definition and Types of Causative Constructions

Single causative constructions can be categorized into different groups. Mono-transitive constructions involve only one agent and one patient, such as in the sentence, “She made him laugh.” Indirect-object constructions indicate the presence of an indirect object; for example, “She gave him a book to read.” Dative constructions show the beneficiary by using a dative case, like in “She taught him French.” Adpositional constructions involve prepositions that imply causation, demonstrated by examples like “She urged him into action” (Flach, 2021).

Ditransitive patterns are commonly involved in double causative constructions. The primary patterns observed include mono-transitive double causative patterns where one agent causes another agent to act, as depicted in “John made Mary sing.” Moreover, complex double causative patterns exist and are typically more intricate, with several causative verbs or clauses within the structure (Jayeola, 2020; Rappaport, 2020). The types of construction are also likely a function of verb semantics because different verbs have various argument structure options.

Syntactic Structures of Causative Constructions

Transitive causative constructions exhibit an agent, a causative verb, and a direct object. For instance, in “John made Mary cry”, the agent is “John”, the causative verb is “made”, and the direct object is “Mary”. Such constructions come with specific word order and selectional limitations where the causative verb is succeeded by a patient argument related to the caused event. The agent, a causative verb, and a small clause make up small clause constructions, as illustrated in “John made Mary angry”. The small clause usually consists of a predicative adjective or noun plus an object, led by a non-finite marked-object complement. Small clause constructions deviate from transitive constructions because of their syntactic structure as well as the restrictions that apply to them (Nash, 2020; Rasia & Ausensi, 2020).

The causative verb found in single-verb causatives establishes a clear cause-and-effect connection between the subject and the action or state it produces, like when saying “You make me angry” or “That movie made me cry.” Such constructions are typically coercive in nature, as they depict the subject imposing a specific emotional state (often against the addressee's will) on the other.

A construction used to describe a double-verb causative is when one party causes another party to change their state or activity by carrying out an action, as in “John made Mary sing” or “The concert got the audience clapping”. In such cases, the former verb is typically lightweight in its semantic content delivery; the latter verb bears the full weight of information (Ledgeway, 2021; Mitrović, 2022; Guerra, 2020).

Semantics and Pragmatics of Causative Constructions

The implication of causing someone to do something is that the causer/agent would not typically want to do it or may be prevented from doing it. A causative form of an intransitive verb that expresses a change in state includes a do/make causative construction, as the semantic range of such verbs implies control by an agent over the change. There are significant constraints on using this form further: for an intransitive verb to function as a causative verb, it must be able to introduce an additional element of meaning that clearly expresses the cause of the change. Furthermore, the semantics of the causative typically suggest that the situation described by the

intransitive occurs at the instigation of an agent affected by what caused it (Nadathur & Lauer, 2020).

The involvement of an additional element of control in some causative constructions can be seen as the causer's unwillingness. It can be implied that such pragmatic implications are an integral part of the meaning of a particular causative construction because not all causative constructions have this meaning. This shows that the distinction between semantics and pragmatics cannot always be clearly established, even though the semantic/pragmatic distinction often mirrors the difference between substantive and formal causatives. This control is explicit in make + do causatives, which are probably the most common in English. The make + do causative has several allowable interpretations, including one where the causer feels compelled to do something and yet is also reluctant (Sigurðsson & Wood, 2021).

Making distinctions among the three types of English causatives - the make/do, have/get, and simple causatives - apart from just their verb meaning involves more detailed scrutiny of what these structures imply. Typically, in causative constructions, the action caused is under more control by the causee/patient than in an ordinary construction where the causer can play a passive role or even be omitted. Hence, any verb expressing a change-of-state or achievement in its basic form must give way to a causative resultative when used in a causative construction; "causative resultative" implies that a resultative must be added to the verb for it to form such a construction. Moreover, any agentive verb adds more control than the basic verb (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 2020).

Research Gaps

Causative constructions play a role in the description of change-of-state events, which involve an agent making a patient transition into or through some transformational or transitional state. The earlier studies usually described these events by identifying syntactic roles, semantic features, including agent and patient, and structural causative verb patterns. However, construction grammar may provide another perspective on how these events are represented: not just as separate entities but as unified constructions embodying their form and meaning. Recent studies have indeed addressed this gap by applying construction grammar to the analysis of change-of-state events. For instance, Boas (2013) explores how constructional meaning extends beyond individual syntactic roles to encompass the entire event structure, emphasizing the holistic representation of form and meaning in causative constructions. Similarly, Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2021) have focused on the interplay between verb meaning and constructional meaning, arguing that construction grammar can better account for variations in how change-of-state events are expressed across different contexts. Additionally, Iwata (2020) discusses the integration of causation and event structure in language, showing that constructional approaches allow for a more nuanced understanding of how different languages encode similar change-of-state meanings. These studies highlight the value of construction grammar in offering a more comprehensive view of how causative constructions represent complex events.

The application of construction grammar to causative constructions that involve changes in the state might shed light on the overall patterns - revealing the typical form-meaning pairs, which are usually causative and portraying a more unified perspective on how these constructions express their meaning with change-of-state events. This particular methodology could help us unearth cognitive schemas: how people see causatives and what makes them understand that one event leads to another, thus giving us some valuable clues about mental images related to different types of causatives. Moreover, by considering language use as creative variability, construction grammar allows us to see how speakers come up with new ways of saying things

or adjust what they say based on the context in which it is said. Instead of viewing syntax separately from meaning in causatives, this approach reveals how structural components are coupled with their intended meaning, showing the interconnectedness between form and function.

To sum up, the failure to apply construction grammar in investigating causatives - especially in reference to those changes - represents a considerable research gap. Finding one's way across this void may open wider horizons in our perception of what causatives are and how they work; such an understanding can only lead us further toward theoretical and practical progress in linguistics.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions:

How do native English speakers perceive and interpret the nuances of causative constructions in depicting changes of state in various contexts?

Methods

In the context of qualitative research, this paper applies the Construction Grammar framework proposed by Adele Goldberg (1995) and William Croft (2001) to analyze causative constructions and their relationship with state changes in English. Specifically, Goldberg's theory, which emphasizes the connection between form and meaning in linguistic constructions, was operationalized by identifying instances where causative constructions convey changes in state, examining how each construction's syntactic structure aligns with its semantic function. Croft's Radical Construction Grammar was utilized to explore the diversity and adaptability of these constructions, analyzing how different syntactic patterns reflect cognitive processes and pragmatic elements. By employing these frameworks, the study aims to understand how causative constructions represent linguistic actions and events, emphasizing their role in expressing state changes. This approach provides a detailed examination of both the structural makeup and the semantic significance of these constructions, offering insights that can enhance their use in day-to-day communication.

Data Collection

A collection of 310 English samples was obtained to support this study, sourced from various outlets, predominantly reputable British and American online newspapers. The sample collection process followed a rigorous procedure: first, relevant texts were selected based on their use of causative constructions, specifically focusing on examples that illustrate a clear cause-and-effect relationship. These texts were then screened for authenticity and credibility, ensuring they came from recognized and authoritative sources published between 2010 and 2024. All samples were taken from online outlets to provide a contemporary and accessible dataset. The selected samples were categorized according to different types of causative constructions to cover a wide range of grammatical patterns. Additionally, a balanced representation of various contexts, such as news articles, editorials, and opinion pieces, was maintained, ensuring that the samples were drawn from various publication periods to capture diverse language uses across different time frames, facilitating the effective exploration of causal structures in the English language.

Methodological Approach

The approach is based on two key areas:

- **Identifying Constructions:** This involves locating linguistic patterns in which causative constructions are typically found, including those that currently exist and those that may arise in the future. Utilizing Goldberg's theory helps to uncover the underlying meaning of these structures.
- **Analyzing Form and Meaning:** This step focuses on examining the structure and meaning of the identified constructions. The theoretical framework proposed by Croft is used to study the relationship between syntactic roles and semantic functions. We do not just concentrate on these specific constructions but also consider how they operate within Construction Grammar overall.

Analytical Framework

The study consists of closely scrutinizing English language data in search of causative constructions and state change phenomena. These observations focus on particular grammatical structures that signal relationships between cause and transition. When carrying out the analysis, these structures are broken down into individual components - including the causative verb, subject, and object - to see how they are organized in order to grasp their function within the framework of Construction Grammar. Data is seen as specific linguistic acts or events, which are further considered in terms of how they are expressed through general and particular pragmatic actions within the language.

Goals

The main purpose of the investigation is to reveal the formation and function essence of English as a means for expressing causative actions and changes. The scrutiny delves into these levels of cognitive synthesis, which, although obscured from consciousness, underlie our use of language: these insights are not only pabulum for theoretic linguistics but also have implications for applied studies in linguistic analysis.

Results/Findings

Distribution of Causative Construction Types in English:

The distribution of causative construction types in English provides insight into how different structures represent causation in language. Table 1 categorizes 310 examples into three main types: Single-Agent Causative Constructions, making up 48%; multi-agent Causative Constructions, representing 29%; and Internal Causative Constructions, accounting for 23%. A deeper analysis in Table 2 reveals the nuances within these categories, highlighting the balanced representation of physical and emotional/mental changes in single-agent constructions and the preference for physical changes over biological ones in internal causatives. This analysis showcases how English captures diverse causation scenarios across contexts, emphasizing agency, interaction, and internal processes.

Table 1.*Overall Categorization of 310 Examples*

Category	Percentage (%)
Single-Agent Causative Constructions (Total)	48%
Multi-Agent Causative Constructions	29%
Internal Causative Constructions (Total)	23%

The distribution presented in Table 1 provides an overview of the three main types of causative constructions found in the dataset: Single-agent causative Constructions make up 48% of the examples, indicating their prevalence in representing situations where one entity causes a change. Multi-Agent Causative Constructions account for 29%, reflecting the complexity and diversity of scenarios where multiple entities interact to effect change. Meanwhile, Internal Causative Constructions represent the smallest proportion, at 23%, highlighting situations where events occur without external influence.

Table 2. *Subcategorization within Main Categories*

Subcategory	Percentage of Total (%)	Percentage within Category (%)
Physical Changes in Single-Agent	22%	48%
Emotional/Mental Changes in Single-Agent	26%	48%
Biological Change in Internal	10%	23%
Physical Change in Internal	13%	23%

A closer look at the subcategories in Table 2 offers a more nuanced understanding of these constructions. Within the single-agent category, there is an even split between Physical Changes (22%) and Emotional/Mental Changes (26%), each making up 48% of that category, underscoring the balanced representation of both behavioral and psychological transformations. For Internal Causative Constructions, the distribution is slightly uneven, with Physical Changes (13%) occurring more frequently than Biological Changes (10%), suggesting a preference for representing changes in inanimate objects. This breakdown illustrates the diverse ways English represents causation depending on context and participants and provides deeper insights into how the language conveys agency, authority, and causation.

Single-Agent Causative Constructions

English single-agent causative constructions, when viewed in light of the approaches suggested by Goldberg (1995) and Croft (2001), point to an interesting finding: syntax and semantics do not just work hand in hand to present simple cause-and-effect situations. They also delve into the control of agency plus interactive dynamics, which can be instrumental in bringing about drastic changes in a patient's state, achieved through action pattern and entity interaction illustrated via language construction.

The analysis considered different situations in which single actors bring about notable physical changes and emphasized the importance of causal verbs in such instances.

Table 3.*Examples of Table of Physical Changes in Single-Agent Causative Constructions*

Example	Agent	Causative Verb	Patient	Resultant State
1	<i>He</i> (a person initiating and executing the construction)	<i>built</i> (constructing)	<i>the stadium</i> (a large architectural structure)	built (completed, reflecting a transformation from vacant land to a completed stadium)
2	<i>He</i> (the individual performing the cooking action)	<i>cooked</i> (preparing food)	<i>the meals</i> (food items being prepared)	cooked (food transformed from raw to cooked, enhancing its safety and flavor)
3	<i>My teenage son</i> (actively engaging in homework)	<i>does</i> (performing a task)	<i>homework</i> (tasks assigned)	done (completed, indicating a change from unfinished to finished state)

Significance of the Causative Verb

The significance of the causative verbs, such as “built,” “cooked,” and “does,” lies in their ability to connect the agent's actions with the changes brought about in the patient's physical condition. These verbs are not merely action words; they are indicators of the transformation achieved by the action. For instance, in the examples provided in **Table 3**, the verbs vividly portray the transition from one state to another, whether it be constructing a building, preparing food, or completing a task.

This study demonstrates that, through causative verbs, language effectively describes tangible cause-and-effect situations in both everyday and specific contexts, such as academic or legal settings. These verbs not only convey physical changes but also hint at cognitive and emotional transformations occurring at an intrinsic level, reflecting the transformative role of the agent in altering the mental states or behaviors of the subjects. Thus, the analysis of single-agent causative constructions provides valuable insights into how such changes are represented in different grammatical frameworks and contexts.

The examples presented in Table 4 illustrate how single-agent causative constructions can bring about emotional or mental changes across various contexts. In a legal context (Example 4), the verb “force” is used by the court, a powerful legal entity, to compel the defendant to comply or make restitution, reflecting a strong mental and behavioral change. This demonstrates the verb's capacity to induce significant psychological and social transformation by restoring legal balance. In the context of educational influence (Example 5), a mathematics teacher employs the verb “persuaded” to shift a student's academic focus, which impacts the student's current educational path and potentially alters their future trajectory, showcasing the far-reaching effects of educational guidance. Meanwhile, the emotional and cognitive impact (Example 6) is evident in everyday communication, where the agent (‘he’) uses the verb ‘made’ to move the patient from a state of misunderstanding to comprehension. This represents a significant mental shift, highlighting how causative structures can drive changes in cognitive and emotional states and foster understanding and empathy between individuals. These examples underscore that causative constructions in English are not merely descriptive tools for actions but are also potent mechanisms for conveying profound psychological and emotional changes across different

settings.

Table 4.

Examples of Table of Emotional/Mental Changes in Single-Agent Causative Constructions

Example	Agent	Causative Verb	Patient	Resultant State
4	<i>The court</i> (a powerful legal entity initiating a forceful action)	<i>force</i> (applying legal pressure)	<i>the defendant</i> (required to comply with a ruling)	disgorging the value (legal restitution, restoring fairness)
5	<i>A mathematics teacher</i> (influencing decision-making)	<i>persuaded</i> (influencing academic choice)	<i>him</i> (the student being persuaded)	studying science instead of history (a shift in academic focus)
6	<i>He</i> (initiator of a causative process)	<i>made</i> (imparting understanding)	<i>me</i> (the person gaining new insight)	understanding the urgency that artists feel (shift from unawareness to awareness)

These examples highlight the adaptability of individual causative constructions to represent physical, mental, and emotional changes. In these constructions, agents play an active role in coercing or persuading patients to change their attitudes or behavior, which vividly represents real-life situations in which people play a role. Having an impact on the lives of others. Understanding such linguistic structures helps us appreciate how they reflect the complex social and psychological dynamics that can occur in human society.

From examples 1 to 6, the single-agent causative construction can be represented by the following formula:

[Agent] + [Causative Verb] + [Patient] + [Resulting State]

The single-agent causative construction in English includes three main components: the agent, the patient, and the new state (resulting state). These elements interact closely to convey the complete meaning of the sentence.

- **Agent:** This is the entity that performs the action causing the change.
- **Patient:** This is the entity that undergoes a change of state due to the action's impact.
- **Resulting State:** This is the state achieved by the patient after undergoing the change. The causative verb in the single-agent causative construction plays a crucial role in expressing the action that causes the change and the patient's new state.

These are typically transitive verbs that can depict changes in the patient's position, shape, quality, or state (physical or mental). The single-agent causative construction is the most basic form of causative construction, involving only one agent and one patient. Based on the nature of the action causing the change, the single-agent causative construction can be classified into two main types:

- **Physical-impact causative constructions:** These constructions usually involve a direct process in which the agent uses physical strength or skills to change the patient's state.

- **Mental-impact causative constructions:** These constructions typically involve a process in which the agent influences through speech, thought, or emotions, adjusting the patient's thoughts or psyche through persuasion, encouragement, or demands, leading to a new state without direct physical intervention.

Multi-Agent Causative Constructions

The analysis of Examples 9 and 10 clearly shows that multi-agent causal structures represent scenarios where multiple agents interact to change patients. These interactions can appear competitive or cooperative, depending largely on the context of the actions and the language design.

Table 3.

Examples of Multi-Agent Causative Constructions

Example	Agents	Causative Verb	Patient	Resulting State	Description
9	Heavy rain and strong winds	<i>caused</i>	<i>havoc</i>	Widespread disruption	Heavy rain and strong winds compete to dominate, resulting in significant environmental upheaval.
10	<i>Dr. Pyykko and his colleagues</i>	<i>made</i>	<i>two versions of a computer model of lead-acid batteries</i>	Two versions created	A group of scientists collaborates to create two versions of a model, showcasing a cooperative effort in scientific research.

In multi-agent causal structures, the perception of agent interactions (whether competitive or cooperative) significantly affects our understanding of causal behavior. This perception depends not only on the behavior of the agents but also on the way the behavior is represented linguistically:

- **Competitive Dynamics:** In Example 9, the construction “heavy rain and strong winds caused havoc” uses the verb “caused” to emphasize a confrontational interaction between the agents. This portrayal suggests a struggle for dominance in which the natural forces of rain and wind are personified as competitors vying to dramatically impact the environment.
- **Cooperative Dynamics:** Conversely, Example 10 highlights a cooperative relationship among the agents with the verb “made”. This collaborative effort by Dr. Pyykko and his colleagues to develop models illustrates a positive, goal-oriented interaction. Here, the agents combine their expertise to achieve a common objective, reflecting a synergy that enhances their creative output.

The theory of Construction Grammar, proposed by Goldberg (1995) and Croft (2001), centers on the idea that how people perceive the change of state is primarily influenced by the situation plus the specific linguistic cues that are employed in it. This theoretical perspective focuses on the significance of considering the individual's goals and narrative during the determination of the type of interaction, whether it is cooperative or conflictive.

The shift from a single-agent causative structure to a multi-agent causative structure involves modifying the structure to accommodate more than one interacting agent. This modification enables a detailed representation of how various agents' actions result in an outcome:

[Agent 1] + [Agent 2] (+ [Agent 3], ..., [Agent n]) + [Causative Verb] + [Patient] + [Resulting State]

Every participant contributes to the change process through competition or cooperation. Causative verbs emphasize their interactive nature, as these verbs govern the patient's progression of change. This model highlights the complex nature of these causal processes in language, demonstrating that both cooperative and competitive behaviors involving multiple participants can significantly affect outcomes, using metaphors of clarity and tact to describe cause and effect.

A study of the causes of events involving more than one participant not only describes the complex network of interactions between these participants but can also provide insight into how language as a system affects these events. As a result, the investigation of these structures facilitates an increased understanding of the mechanisms by which languages express the effects of multiple sources (which then also define our understanding of causes, whether they occur in real life or in planned settings).

Internal Causative Constructions

In natural processes, causative constructions often reveal the unique phenomena where the agent and patient are the same entity, demonstrating autonomous changes without external intervention. These changes are typically described using intransitive verbs that denote a change of state, emphasizing the self-contained nature of these transformations.

Table 4.

Examples of Internal Causative Constructions

Example	Agent and Patient	Intransitive Verb	Resulting State	Description
11	<i>Apples on apple trees</i>	ripened	Apples ripened	The apples mature naturally on the trees, turning ripe without direct human intervention, indicating a biological process of maturation.
12	<i>The flowers</i>	bloom	Flowers bloomed	Flowers bloom naturally at the end of summer, marking a change from buds to fully opened flowers, a seasonal biological rhythm.
13	<i>The building</i>	collapsed	Building collapsed	The building collapses due to structural failures or external factors like natural disasters, with the structure itself undergoing change.
14	<i>The water</i>	boiled off	Water evaporated	Water undergoes a phase change from liquid to gas as it boils off, driven by high temperatures in a natural physical process.

Key Characteristics of Internal Causative Constructions

- **Agent and Patient as One:** In these constructions, the agent is also the patient, simultaneously undergoing and effecting the change. This highlights the subject's autonomy in triggering its transformation, typical in both biological and physical contexts.
- **Intransitive Causative Verbs:** These verbs illustrate the natural progression or change in state without external influences. Examples include:
 - Biological: ripen, bloom, wilt, decay.
 - Physical: collapse, boil (off), melt, freeze.
- **Resulting State:** The outcome of the process is often described using the same verb as the action, emphasizing the completion of the natural or autonomous process. For example, "ripened" describes the action and confirms the apples' readiness for consumption.
- **Absence of External Agents:** A distinctive feature of these constructions is the lack of external intervention, making the process dependent solely on internal or natural factors associated with the agent/patient.

Biological vs. Physical Internal Causative Constructions

- **Biological Processes:** Changes like ripening and flowering are controlled by internal biological processes. These processes occur throughout an organism's lifetime, such as the mature plant, and are affected by seasonal changes.
- **Physical Processes:** Changes like building collapses or water boiling are influenced by physical forces or conditions, such as structural stability, temperature, and pressure, that are not affected by human activity.

These examples reflect the subjects' independence in their transformation and showcase the diversity and richness of expressing natural processes in language. Understanding these internal causative constructions enriches our grasp of how language can encapsulate complex natural phenomena, where the subject itself is both the initiator and recipient of change. This model underscores the tightly knit relationship between form and meaning in language, illustrating how subjects autonomously alter their states in accordance with internal or natural dynamics.

Internal causative constructions offer a robust and versatile framework for depicting entities' self-driven processes and transformations. These constructions are reflected across various contexts and semantic nuances in language, as demonstrated by the following examples:

Table 5.*Examples of Internal Causative Constructions in Various Contexts*

Example	Agent and Patient	Intransitive Verb	Resulting State	Description
15	<i>Her baby</i>	grows up (to be a doctor)	Became a doctor	The baby's development into a doctor reflects a natural personal growth and learning progression, leading to a significant career without direct external influence.
16	<i>The weather</i>	changes (hourly)	Hourly changes of weather	This describes the rapid and continuous transformation of weather conditions, a natural phenomenon reflecting unpredictable environmental fluctuations.
17	<i>The economy</i>	rebounded	Economic recovery	The economy's recovery after a downturn highlights an intrinsic economic process influenced by business cycles and responses to economic policies or improvements in the global business environment.

These examples extend internal causative constructions beyond mere biological or physical changes, incorporating intrinsic changes within social, psychological, and economic dimensions. For instance:

- *“The economy rebounded after a few years”* reflects the natural recuperation of the economy after a downturn, indicating economic changes through cycles and responses to economic interventions or improvements in the business environment.
- *“The weather changes hourly”* illustrates intrinsic shifts in climatic conditions without external intervention, showing how natural elements alone can lead to significant changes.

Such transformations, whether biological, physical, psychological, or economic, demonstrate transitions from one state to another, often without direct external influence. This emphasizes change's spontaneous and intrinsic aspect, showcasing the profound and diverse ways natural processes are represented in language. Through these examples, internal causative constructions highlight the close relationship between language form and meaning and how subjects independently change their states in response to internal or natural dynamics.

Discussion

As detailed in the analysis above, the distribution of Causal Constructions in English reveals insights into the language that help capture the nature of change-of-state events. These events are complex, especially due to subtle changes in state in different contexts. This discussion explores the results in more depth, focusing on examples of classifications and subclassifications within each major category and contrasting and comparing these results with previous studies.

Single-Agent Causative Constructions

The utilization of Single-Agent Cause indicates that a single agent undertakes alterations to state occurrences. Previous investigations only considered physical alterations, but this study considers the entire spectrum of emotions and thoughts that result from a particular construction. This initiated process reflects the complex nature of the changes. This outcome aligns with previous research by Jayeola (2020) and Middeke (2021), who noted that a single action can lead to multiple state changes. The alterations are subtle and have a significant purpose. As a result, language is used as a complex transition that conveys important changes in the state of the language.

Multi-Agent Causative Constructions

Multiple-agent constructions that are oriented towards collaboration or competition have multiple agents involved. Through these processes, state changes are induced. This demonstrates the degree to which language is capable of capturing the complexity of cause-and-effect relationships. This outcome is in line with what Rappaport (2020) and Flach (2021) reported. These authors suggest that causal event descriptions are primarily derived from the interactions between multiple participants. Despite the conflicting opinions of language experts, the general consensus is to acknowledge the significant impact of the alteration on overall results. Through different linguistic expressions, the English language vividly depicts the complex nature of the state changes in interactions between multiple parties.

Internal Causative Constructions

From the findings of the research, it can be seen that Internal causal constructions represent changes of states that occur internally of the agents themselves without any impact or influence from any external factors. Whether it is the biological transformation of living organisms or unexpected changes in natural phenomena, they all demonstrate the ability of language to depict the inherent nature of the transition between states. This aligns with the work done by Nash (2020) and Mangialavori Rasia plus Ausensi (2020), who explored how internal causes reflect such natural and spontaneous changes. Accordingly, instead of mutations themselves, these works focus entirely on studying changes in internal state events. Rather than being influenced by external sources, all changes are born within themselves, and this new understanding can only help enrich further research into delicate issues such as causation or transitions.

Incorporating Goldberg's and Croft's Frameworks

As mentioned in the Literature Review Section, this study uses the Goldberg (1995) and Croft (2001) model. Accordingly, Goldberg's Construction Grammar emphasizes that constructions always include a parallel form and meaning. In particular, each construction serves a specific function that cannot be completely separated from its components. This gives a comprehensive view of Causative Constructions, both their syntactic structure and semantic function. From there, the implications of different causal construction models are revealed.

Applying Croft's (2001) work on radical construction grammar in this study contributes to clarifying Goldberg's point. Through Croft's lens, the study has shown the diversity and adaptability of Causative Constructions in English without losing the context in which these constructions are used and the specific communicative purposes they are intended for. The discussion of Causative Constructions in English reveals their meaning and highlights the ability of language to describe transformative complexities. Unlike previous studies, this study goes deeper into the problem by interweaving syntactic and semantic analysis, which emphasizes causal construction that often denotes change, supported by observations by Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2020). Therefore, in its detailed description, English presents

a richness that reveals cause-and-effect relationships. From here, we better grasp these interwoven elements that make up the fabric of existence. By adopting such a holistic perspective, this study addresses the limitations noted in previous studies and paves the way for a full description of how such structures operate in the system. Incorporating Goldberg and Croft's frameworks into the research gap is of great benefit because it offers a more detailed and complex examination of the underlying causes of constructs, especially those related to event dynamics that change the state of affairs. This, in turn, drives significant advances in both theory-based and real-world applications in the field of linguistics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of a detailed analysis of causative constructions and their different subtypes clearly demonstrate how language intricately encodes changes in state events. This ranges from vivid descriptions of single actions by a single agent to complex, multi-agent constructions that involve detailed interactions and even internal transformations that occur independently but remain connected to other events.

This may indicate a powerful means by which humans can realize dynamic cause-and-effect relationships in developing states. Accordingly, the findings on human cognitive evolution through language and every alteration in state have significant importance. Whether they are events of change of state that are observed in the physical world, significant changes in emotional and mental conditions, or the inherent nature of the progression of natural phenomena, language is always a powerful means to transmit complex constructions of the real world.

This research highlights the unique capacity of language to capture information about causes and changes in state. As this data is collected, it helps us understand how people perceive and interpret causative structures. By understanding the complexity of causative constructions, we recognize the importance of state changes in representing the world through language, which, in turn, influences how these structures are formed.

Overall, the study of Causative Constructions on change of state events in English increases our understanding of the diversity and complexity of language and clarifies the dynamic connection between human relations consequences and status changes in our daily conversations. Moving forward, continuing to investigate the complexities of language and cognition, these analyses will guide further explore the complex connections between language, thought, and the ever-present natural changes in human experience.

The study provides valuable insights into causative constructions in English, though there are opportunities for further exploration. Expanding beyond British and American written sources could enhance our understanding of how these constructions function across different dialects, registers, and spoken contexts. Additionally, incorporating a wider range of contexts, such as everyday conversation or digital communication, could offer a more comprehensive view. Future research might also benefit from cross-linguistic analysis and the application of alternative theoretical frameworks to capture the full complexity of causative constructions in language use.

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Biodata

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Translanguaging in EFL Classrooms: Practice and Implications for Lecturers from Students' Lens

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging, introduced by Cen William, refers to using two or more languages in the same lessons in a bilingual classroom. Although sharing certain similarities with code-switching as a phenomenon, Translanguaging has been developed to be a teaching method in EFL classrooms as an adaptive, innovative response to the dynamic changes in the modern scenario in which internationalization and digitalization are the central influential factors. However, in the Vietnamese context, Translanguaging is still questionable among stakeholders as it challenges the well-established ELT traditional approaches. The study sought to uncover contextual insights regarding the use and efficacy of translanguaging in EFL classrooms by analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. An online survey, with both Likert-type items and open-ended questions, was administered to collect data from 183 university students from a university in Ho Chi Minh city. In addition, qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with ten students from the same group. Although the findings show positive aspects of translanguaging in action, they also reveal the challenges that the theories provide for both the instructor and students in acquiring English at the tertiary level.

Keywords:

translanguaging, EFL, code-switching, pedagogy

Introduction

Globalization and digitalization these days have altered the landscapes of educational systems worldwide in the most dramatic way ever. Advances in technology and the Internet have allowed opportunities for mutual connections, collaborations, and internationalization among institutions far beyond national boundaries and time zones. In response to these dynamic changes, bilingualism and multiculturalism, on the one hand, are welcomed as a significant part of the process, and English as a Global language, on the other hand, has become dominant in most educational settings. These pose challenging questions to relevant stakeholders on how the teaching and learning of English will be adapted and what decisions to make on the language policy to optimize such a vibrant global educational scenario.

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Regarding English Language Teaching, various pedagogical approaches have been constantly developed and adapted over time, from the Grammar Translation focusing on the complete practice of L1 to Direct Method and Communicative Approaches emphasizing the English-only learning environments in the last century, from state-of-the-art Blended Learning, where learning space and time are extended beyond a classroom, to Flipped Classroom, where there is a shift in targets on in-class activities. Also, the project-based approach has been implemented to foster more meaningful outcomes and student engagement in the L2 learning process. In the midst of such a variety, translanguaging has grown in popularity as a pedagogical approach that has the potential to respond well to the dynamism of contemporary global educational settings. The central concept underlying this approach is the adaptable utilization of two or more languages by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to convey meaning and actively participate in communication within specific contexts. (Vogel & Garcia, 2017, p1).

In the Vietnam context, issued in 2008, the “National Foreign Language Project Scheme 2008 to 2020 Period” (known as the Project 2020) Decision by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam has led to remarkable changes among Vietnamese English users in terms of their English proficiency, their potential exposure to various English varieties, and their subsequent attitudes toward them. According to the National Foreign Language Project 2020, most Vietnamese youths “will gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently,” “be more confident in *communication*, further their chance to study and work in an *integrated and multicultural environment* with a variety of languages” (MOET, 2008, p1). Despite unsatisfactory achievements, Project 2020 has triggered a number of subsequent immense changes, such as the Integrated Programme, launched in 2014, offering *English* as the medium of instruction for obtaining *knowledge of interdisciplinary science subjects* to primary and lower secondary public schools in Ho Chi Minh City. Moreover, the nationwide Decision 2080 in 2018, the adjusted version of Project 2020, focused on a foreign language curriculum aiming to develop students’ *communicative competence* and form their *sense of global citizenship* (Van, 2022). What is more, in response to the need to prepare students to be competent *global citizens*, many private institutions have offered bilingual or international programs that have been adapted from the British or American curriculums for those who plan to study and work *internationally*, i.e., *multiculturally* (Chi, 2017). Evidently, the increasing number of transnational collaborative programs and English language centers that have welcomed a multicultural environment in Vietnam during the last 10 years is one vibrant reflection of this tendency.

In this context, translanguaging could be considered an effective teaching approach alongside other innovative ones. However, the act of translanguaging implemented during teacher-student interactions has still been understudied and misunderstood as the old-fashioned Grammar-Translation method and, therefore, has long been avoided. Also, there has been little empirical research on the choice of languages and their effects on students’ learning outcomes, especially at the university level.

Literature review

The Concept of Translanguaging and the Transformation from CodeSwitching to Translanguaging:

The idea of codeswitching was first coined in 20th-century when it was viewed as a linguistic practice outside of the classroom (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021). Codeswitching refers to the practice of switching between languages during a conversation, with a particular emphasis on

grammar. It occurs when two different languages are used, each serving a distinct purpose, while one language may appear more dominant. (Ferguson, 1959; Kamwangamalu, 2010; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021).

In that sense, code-switching maintains a monoglossic perspective on languages, where monolingualism is accepted as the norm. Multilinguals use named languages to identify language elitism, dominance, or proficiency in relation to others (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In light of this, code-switching was eventually included in studies on language acquisition; however, because it generally observed the exchange of languages within and between sentences while paying attention to linguistic structures, researchers felt constrained by its basic principles (Del Valle, 2000; Lewis et al., 2012). According to Creese and Blackledge (2010), code-switching was merely a spontaneous communicative phenomenon, which is insufficient to satisfy pedagogical purposes. They further stated that code-switching in the classroom was often characterized as a sort of language interference that overlooks a person's linguistic background and argued that employing L1 impedes language acquisition. Williams (1994, 2000) then introduced translanguaging through his studies on bilingualism in Welsh-English classrooms. Since then, a considerable number of translanguaging descriptions and its potential in bilingual education have been presented, challenging both the well-established traditional approaches reflecting the monoglossic view and the conventional methods of defining languages that heavily relied on social and political boundaries. (García, 2009; Lewis et al., 2012; García & Li, 2014). Unlike code-switching, translanguaging combines the first and the second languages into a complete unity in a systematic manner, and it includes those language processes as "meaning-making, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (Baker, 2011, p. 288). According to Garcia (2014, p3), translanguaging is not only regarded as the "discourse practices of bilinguals" but also perceived as the "pedagogical practices that use the entire complex linguistic repertoire of bilingual students flexibly in order to teach rigorous content and develop language practices for academic use." Accordingly, translanguaging considers languages that are utilized in the teaching and learning of another language as heteroglossic and interconnected, looking beyond the limiting concepts in code-switching to allow for effective target language growth (García, 2009).

Translanguaging – An innovative pedagogical approach in EFL contexts

In the past, language teaching for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) did not explicitly consider translanguaging as a pedagogical tool, although certain traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) methods did encourage the use of the learners' first language (L1) while teaching them a foreign language (L2). The well-known methodologies, such as the GTM (Grammar Translation Method), CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), and Natural Approach, suggest that incorporating the first language (L1) in teaching can foster mutual interactions and enhance comprehension in language learning. However, some methodologies in the 21st century discourage teachers from using L1 as learners progress or restrict its use solely for translation (Matamoros-González et al., 2017). Accordingly, Audiolingualism was described as a method that rejected the use of students' native language by teachers and learners and purposefully immersed students in the target language as an essential to boost their speaking skills.

Meanwhile, in today's world, it has become increasingly essential for people to be proficient in more than one language. This has led to increased hybridization in all areas and domains of human existence, resulting in a highly diverse situation referred to as "superdiversity" (Piller, 2016, p.21). Consequently, schools or educational institutions, as microcosms of society,

exhibit the bilingual or multilingual characteristics of a community within their classrooms. In response to that global context, translanguaging has emerged as a practice in English language teaching, particularly in classrooms with a larger population of multilingual students. Kleyn and García (2019) suggested incorporating translanguaging practices into the instruction of English as a New Language (ENL), English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), or English as a Second Language (TESL), aiming to reform English language teaching and learning, which traditionally focused on monolingual approaches, and recognizes the valuable learning practices of bilingual and multilingual individuals by utilizing their full linguistic capabilities. Translanguaging practices for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are readily apparent and achievable in classrooms when learners are able to learn or use English with other languages as much as they wish to comprehend the target language materials.

Ofelia García's and Hesson's (2015) proposed a framework of translanguaging for educators, in which there are examples of how bilingual or multilingual students can use their language skills to access multilingual materials, ask questions, and express themselves before, during, and after English language tasks involving speaking, listening, reading and writing. Regarding teachers, they can offer instructions or feedback in both L1 and L2, therefore establishing a secure environment for interactions, allowing students to confidently express themselves using their linguistic abilities, and assigning peer support while employing translanguaging. In the end, students are able to comprehend and connect with the content of the four English language skills.

Previous Studies on Translanguaging

There have been many disagreements between practitioners of second languages regarding the use of L1 in L2 classrooms (Üstünel and Seedhouse, 2005). The major disagreement has been over whether switching back and forth between the mother tongue and the target languages in a foreign language classroom is helpful or inhibitive (Jingxia, 2010).

Researchers have reported the rejection of the employment of L1 by L2 students since they view it as a limitation of their L2 experience (Nazary, 2008). However, according to Canagarajah (2011), a monolingual educational policy is not effective at keeping the L1 out of the L2 classroom even when they are strongly endorsed. This could be explained by the fact that low-level students who benefit from the use of L1 in L2 classes always make opportunities for this to occur, as illustrated by Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005). It is in line with the study by Portoles and Marti (2017) examining the practice of translanguaging at the early stages of the language learning process and demonstrating that different functions can be served by employing L1, L2, and L3. To put it another way, the monolingual approach does not actually support the teaching of English. Moreover, according to a study conducted in Malaysia, the continuous use of L1 in classrooms can result in learning anxiety and negatively affect learners who are exposed to classroom expectations that they must continuously and accurately use English (Wong & Yoong, 2019).

In contrast, a considerable number of studies have claimed the opposing views. Advocates of L1 argue that L1 inclusion increases the L2 learning rate, reduces L2 errors, and facilitates L1 grammar and vocabulary acquisition (Wong & Yong, 2009; Du, 2016). Having students explain the content in L1 and vice versa also allows teachers to assess their students' learning. As Holi Ali (2020) further explains, translanguaging with L1 serves the purpose of summarising, clarifying, emphasizing, and repeating crucial academic information. This is in accordance with Baker's (2011) conclusion that translanguaging may foster a more insightful comprehension of content as well as develop learners' L2 skills simultaneously.

Indeed, the practice of immersing learners in an English-only environment while limiting the interference of their first language has been a longstanding skepticism among practitioners and students in regard to the effectiveness of L1 as a means of learning English. Proponents of L1 exclusion claim that L2-only classrooms provide learners with an environment that is almost natural and full of unpredictable language experiences, which develop and activate the L2 learners' language schema, thereby increasing their opportunities for L2 learning (Escobar and Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015; Matamoros-González et al., 2017). Therefore, the application of intermittent translanguaging in the classroom can be a good way for EFL teachers to reduce learners' anxiety and encourage English language learning by making use of a variety of means. Through the alternation of L1 and L2 in the classroom, learners may gradually become comfortable or confident using L2 skills (Akbar & Taqi, 2020; Nguyen, 2022). Moreover, Huan & Joseph (2024) emphasized the additional benefits of translanguaging in social interactions by claiming that Translanguaging facilitates a variety of social activities in the classroom from peer to peer: group discussion, turn-taking, peer repairs, and so on. Similarly, Maryvone et al. (2023) concluded that Translanguaging helped students communicate freely and critically in a dynamic social environment. For this reason, studies on students' perceptions found that they have preferences for the use of Translanguaging in their English classrooms. (Yamagami, 2023).

Hence, one of the most important elements that needs to be taken into account is teachers' perceptions in this new approach. Indeed, positive perceptions towards translanguaging among EFL teachers is vital in order to effectively practice this pedagogy in the classroom. Many studies have been conducted to explore the necessity of teachers' awareness in the use of translanguaging. Holdway and Hitchcock (2018) emphasized that teachers should be aware of the beneficial potential of allowing L1 purposefully in both teaching and learning activities. Therefore, they claimed, the focus should be switched to the effective utilization of translanguaging models in the classroom, regardless of a student's native language. Tsang and Lo (2020) claim that teachers who practice translanguaging pedagogy in their classrooms can improve both learners' L1 and L2 skills, at different levels, by having them contrast different aspects of both L1 and L2 languages. As a result, they can explicitly teach their learners transferable skills between L1 and L2, and conduct repetition of these skills as consolidations in a bilingual program with a pluricentric approach. If L1 is the only language used in a classroom, then it may create a more significant language barrier between the teacher and the student (Qiu & Fang, 2019). To put it in another way, translanguaging in the EFL classroom has a positive impact on classroom management, fosters in-class bonding, and avoids possible conflicts taking place in the classroom (Ali,2020; Tan & Low,2017).

In the context of Vietnamese classrooms, a study by Kim & Petraki (2009) concluded that both teachers and students believed that L1 plays a significantly beneficial role at the early stages of learning English as a foreign language. EFL teachers and students in Vietnam, however, have reported little use of translanguaging due to the principle of a monolingual approach. The placement of the L1 in our context is still overlooked, which undermines the vital role it plays in a student's identity and linguistic repertoire as an L2. In addition, EFL students and teachers are prone to utilizing translanguaging in a spontaneous, unplanned manner in the classrooms due to skepticism regarding its benefits and a lack of well-researched conceptual frameworks for planning translanguaging practices. In our research on instructions for pedagogical translanguaging, we have drawn on the gaps left in previous studies as well as a lack of empirical studies in the Vietnamese context for inspiration.

Research Questions

This study aims to investigate learners' perception of translanguaging use and how the approach is actually practiced in EFL classrooms in Vietnam from the undergraduates' perspective. In light of the research findings, some practical implications will be recommended for future studies and the effective practice of English language teaching in Vietnam, aiming to meet the long-term goals that were mentioned above.

To be more specific, this paper aims to answer the questions below:

1. What are university students' perceptions of the importance of Translanguaging in language learning?
2. How is translanguaging practiced in EFL classrooms from the university students' view

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The survey was carried out at a university in Ho Chi Minh City. It collected 183 responses from non-English-majored students at A2 and B1 levels, all of whom are freshmen and sophomores who volunteered to participate in the research data collection. Information relating to students is kept confidential and anonymous. As a result, they can freely express their opinions and attitudes regarding the survey questions without being concerned about maltreatment during the course evaluation process.

Design of the Study

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The former approach collected data using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, while the latter one obtained data from in-depth semi-structured interviews of ten students.

Firstly, the questionnaire includes 16 questions adapted from Rivera and Mazak's research (Rivera & Mazak, 2017). Respondents were asked to decide how much they agreed with the 16 statements within the five-point Likert scale: from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The statements relate to four main subtopics: Students' perception of translanguaging as a general practice, in social settings, and in L2 language learning. The Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire items is 0.88, which means that the reliability of the questionnaire is relatively high. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted to elaborate on the results of the quantitative data analysis. Three major questions, with follow-up ones, were formed to gain insights into students' attitudes toward translanguaging and the actual practice of translanguaging in their EFL classrooms.

Data collection & analysis

Regarding the quantitative data collected in the survey, a descriptive analysis was implemented to interpret it. The mean and standard deviation for each item of the questionnaire were calculated. The interval mean scores are 1.00 - 1.80: Strongly Disagree; 1.81-2.6: Disagree; 2.61-3.4: Neutral; 3.41-4.2: Agree; and 4.21-5.0: Strongly Agree. Scores between 2.6-3.4 were considered to indicate neutral perceptions, below 2.6 were interpreted as having negative attitudes, and above 3.4 implied positive views. Regarding the qualitative data, an in-depth transcription of the interview data was first undertaken and then categorized using qualitative thematic analysis. It involves carefully reading the data and identifying critical issues within them before arranging these issues into broader categories. Questions in the questionnaire and

the interview schedule provided a framework within which specific responses could be categorized.

Results/Findings and discussion

Students' perception of the Translanguaging practice in general

The figures in Table 1 indicate most of the respondents believed that the practice of translanguaging was a common activity at their university (overall $M=3.745$). In particular, the majority of the participants said that their English instructors were involved in translanguaging ($M=3.82$), and students often switched between the two languages (English -Vietnamese) when talking to their lecturers, peers, and others at university. ($M=3.67$).

Students' attitudes toward the use of Translanguaging in social settings

The descriptive data presents that the respondents largely had neutral views on the social utility of translanguaging (overall $M=3.234$). Specifically, the participants held neutral perceptions of the ideas that “Translanguaging should be avoided by language users” ($M=3.16$), “Translanguaging in communication indicates the lack of linguistic proficiency in L2” ($M=2.7$), and “Translanguaging is confusing for me in communication” ($M=2.66$). Meanwhile, students tend to agree that engagement in translanguaging in social situations is acceptable ($M=3.86$) and that translanguaging is generally agreeable in society ($M=3.79$).

Students' perception of the use of Translanguaging in target language learning

Generally, the participants positively perceived Translanguaging as a necessary and useful approach for their language learning ($M=3.89$). The practice of translanguaging was believed not only to be an essential factor in learning a new language ($M=4.04$), but also a helpful tool in boosting students' confidence in the classrooms (4.03) and enhancing engagement in their conversations with peers (4.07). Moreover, graduate students held positive perceptions regarding the effective utilization of translanguaging in completing university tasks ($M=3.86$), developing communicative skills in language classrooms ($M=4.04$), and clarifying complicated concepts ($M=4.21$). In terms of the role of instructors' application of translanguaging in the classroom, most of them exhibited their agreement on the positive impact of listening to lectures and instructions in two languages ($M=4.12$), which could help them improve L2 learning experience. Despite this, when being asked if instructors who used Translanguaging were considered unprofessional, the respondents indicated neutral perceptions ($M=2.61$).

Table 1.

Students' Perceptions of Translanguaging

	MEAN	SD
TRANSLANGUAGING IN PRACTICE	3.745	
English Instructors in my university engage in translanguaging	3.82	1.11
I often use translanguaging in social settings	3.67	1.13
TRANSLANGUAGING IN SOCIAL SETTINGS	3.234	
Translanguaging should be avoided by language users.	3.16	1.31
Translanguaging indicates a lack of linguistic proficiency in your second language.	2.7	1.47
Translanguaging is confusing for me in communication.	2.66	1.39
It is okay to engage in translanguaging in social settings.	3.86	1
Translanguaging is socially acceptable.	3.79	1.12
TRANSLANGUAGING IN L2 LEARNING	3.89	
Translanguaging helped me learn a second language better.	3.99	1.06
Translanguaging is essential for learning a new language.	4.04	1.02
Students should be able to engage in translanguaging to complete university assignments.	3.86	1.1
Translanguaging by a university instructor is unprofessional.	2.61	1.49
If an instructor used translanguaging in class, it would be helpful for the students.	4.12	0.99
Translanguaging helps me engage in conversations with my classmates.	4.07	1.02
Translanguaging may help in the development of students' communicative skills in the language classroom.	4.04	1
Translanguaging can be viewed as a tool for clarification in a language classroom.	4.21	0.94
I feel more confident in classrooms where instructors use translanguaging, rather than those who use English all the time.	4.03	1.06

The interview session was conducted with ten students at two levels selected at random. As a result of the transcription, much interesting information is summarized that corresponds with the results of the survey. As a whole, the interviews indicate a significant positive effect of translanguaging on the majority of the students, especially in the confidence they express themselves in the target language, as well as the students' tendency to improve their speaking fluency through linguistic resources rather than through translanguaging once they reached a certain level of fluency in English speaking.

It should be noted that the majority of students (9 out of 10) were in favor of translanguaging. In the interviewees' views, translanguaging was perceived as a natural practice for language learners.

Yes, I often use both English and Vietnamese in my language classrooms. It is very normal to do so. (S1, extract from the interview)

You know, it was easy to change from one language to another. Sometimes I could not translate a word into English and I just used the Vietnamese word in an English sentence.

It was just my natural reaction to do so. (S3, extract from the interview).

I think changing to and fro between Vietnamese and English helps me to communicate and express my thoughts easier. Most of my English instructors also do the same. (S6, extract from the interview)

Translanguaging is also used a great deal by most participants for their social practice, which they are engaged in on a regular basis.

Sometimes when my teacher asked us to do a task in class, she encouraged us to use English, but we still used Vietnamese occasionally to complete the task because when I spoke English with my friends in group, they could not understand and asked me to use Vietnamese. (S9, extract from the interview)

We often chatted in Vietnamese and adding some English words in our conversations. It was fun to do so. (S3, extract from the interview).

My friends will hate me if I use all English when discussing something with them. (S4, extract from the interview).

In terms of the target language learning, it is noteworthy that 9 out of 10 participants in the study explain that they have become more confident or fairly more confident with their ability to speak English.

Only when my teacher asked us a question and allowed us to use Vietnamese to explain part of our opinions, I was confident enough to raise my hand. (S2, extract from the interview)

...At least, I did use a bit of English, and Vietnamese helped myself understood by my friends. (S6, extract from the interview)

In spite of this positive response, four out of ten students at the highest level believed that translanguaging implies a lack of language proficiency in the target language

I personally think that we should use 100% English to improve English speaking skills. Using Vietnamese can do harm to our speaking skills. (S10, extract from the interview)

I don't think we should use Vietnamese so frequently. My friends use Vietnamese all the time and their speaking skills are very bad. (S7, extract from the interview)

I try not to use too much Vietnamese, although it is so hard. If you often change into your mother tongue, this means you can not use English very well. (S8, extract from the interview)

Discussion and Implications

Generally, the quantitative results shown above indicate that students can recognize the existence of the practice of Translanguaging at their university and welcome translanguaging as an acceptable act in social interactions and EFL classrooms. Additionally, as EFL learners, the students believe that translanguaging is a helpful tool in their L2 acquisition and needs to be utilized in different ways in the learning process. These results have further supported a number of previous findings made by Aoyama (2020), who conducted her research in the Japanese setting, Nambisan (2014) in Iowan language classrooms, Romanowski (2020) in Poland, Liu (2021) in Thailand and Zhou et al. (2021) in China. These studies' results all emphasized the pedagogical positive impact of translanguaging in various aspects from

students' perspectives. However, there are still neutral opinions with relatively high standard deviation ($SD=1.47$ and 1.49) regarding two issues: the use of translanguaging showing a lack of language proficiency among language learners and the use of translanguaging in relation to the professionalism and pedagogical skills of English instructors. These findings reflect the still firmly held belief in the "English-only" pedagogy that highlights the significant roles of language teachers and learners in limiting the use of L1 during the learning process.

It is noticeable that the qualitative data also reflects similar results. To be specific, translanguaging was perceived by interviewees as a natural activity when learning a foreign language. The group believes that translanguaging is a typical linguistic resource that does not hinder effective communication. There is no doubt that translanguaging is an invaluable support for low-level students, particularly when the language instructor utilizes translanguaging to clarify the requirements of a task, a complicated grammatical rule, or an abstract linguistic statement to enhance their ability to understand and retain the information. To put it another way, translanguaging enables students to scaffold their concept learning and provides them with support as they engage with complex content and context. Interestingly, these findings have been reported at odds with ones by Carstens (2016) who found that speakers of various dialects in Africa believed that translanguaging could lead to confusion in classroom communication, and consequently, inhibit the promotion of effective learning. Additionally, students interviewed did not perceive translanguaging to be disrespectful, contrary to the findings of Rivera and Mazak (2017). In their study, more than 50% of the respondents at a Puerto Rican university discussed translanguaging as 'disrespectful' or 'somewhat disrespectful', in contrast to two out of ten of our participants who held the same opinion.

Moreover, in-depth interviews revealed that students viewed Translanguaging as an acceptable act in social interactions. In particular, students with low levels of proficiency often use their L1 conversion to interpret the ideas of their peers correctly or to carry on the discussion that has been started in a group in order to complete the tasks given by their teacher. There was little dispute by students regarding the acceptability of translanguaging within social interactions. These findings are aligned with conclusions made by Huan & Joseph (2024), who conducted their research in EFL Chinese university settings, and Maryvone et al. (2023) in Brazilian bilingual schools. These studies emphasized the role of translanguaging in engaging social interactions among peers. Through translanguaging, students are able to engage more actively in class activities and exchange ideas more easily. Translanguaging is sometimes necessary for students of higher proficiency to provide peer support to inferior partners in higher-level courses.

However, being synchronous to the quantitative findings, the results extracted from the interviews implies controversial attitudes toward whether translanguaging implies a lack of linguistic competence in the target language. The interviews indicate that once students have reached a particular level of proficiency, they are less likely to use translanguaging and are more likely to utilize linguistic resources in order to improve their speaking proficiency. The intermediate-level students assert, for instance, that they need autonomy, interaction, and linguistic input rather than relying heavily on translanguaging in order to develop their linguistic abilities steadily and sustainably. They believe that only regular practice can make them improve their level, though they do not look down on their peers who may not be proficient at communicative skills and have to resort to using translanguaging for instruction and feedback.

This paper's findings have provided some thought-provoking implications in the Vietnamese ELT context. The findings have shed light on the potential of applying Translanguaging in EFL

classrooms as an innovative, efficient approach to language teaching and learning. From what was found in the study, Vietnamese students view Translanguaging positively and perceive it as a helpful stimulator that promotes their learning engagement, assists comprehension, and fosters their autonomy in the way that Translanguaging allows a collaborative, relaxing environment without much language anxiety. The study is also a reflection of the local gradual shifting from monoglossic to heteroglossic view as a response to the contemporary, vibrant world of globalization where World Englishes and multilingualism are unavoidable tendencies. This leads to the second implication for educators and teachers when considering Translanguaging as a purposeful pedagogical method rather than a spontaneous phenomenon in their classroom. As a result, this triggers the need for educational managers to implement training projects for teachers to practice translanguaging consciously and effectively in their classrooms with a well-researched conceptual framework for this innovative approach.

Conclusion

The findings reinforce the benefits of translanguaging practice in language learning, which has been increasingly accepted as a practical pedagogical approach rather than a situational phenomenon. In addition, this study reflects a significant shift in perceptions that new generations of Vietnamese English learners have toward using L1 and/or L2 in language classrooms. Most researched language students affirm the positive effects of translanguaging in empowering their learning autonomy, building their dynamic and participatory engagement, and activating their apprehension of the target language. Moreover, translanguaging is perceived to play a pivotal role in nurturing language identity among learners as a manifestation of the contemporary unavoidable shift from the monoglossic to heteroglossic view in education. Therefore, translanguaging is not about the code-switching between languages but intercultural communication. As a result, in EFL classrooms, EFL teachers must employ translanguaging in a more purposeful and well-planned way with conceptual frameworks of translanguaging as an approach. Concerning native English teachers, knowing about students' L1 and their local cultures could be considered an essential strategies to establish a joyful and productive learning environment.

Last but not least, the paper aimed to study within a small population of 183 undergraduates pursuing non-majored English programs. To gain a more holistic insight into the same matter, future studies could also investigate Vietnamese students across proficiency levels in different institutional settings. In addition, considering practical limitations, it is imperative to examine the same issue from the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as school administrators and policy-makers.

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Biodata

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Nguyen Trang Dung has been a lecturer of English at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology for 15 years since her graduation from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education in 2008. As a teacher, she is also a source of inspiration, even if not with the actual content of the lesson but with her attitude. Teaching keeps her brain young, allowing her to continue her own journey as a lifelong learner. It was not until obtaining Master Degree in Applied Linguistics from University of Curtin in 2012 that made her aware of the great interest in second language acquisition.


Students' Silence – Redefining What It Means to Participate in EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: silence, EFL, classroom participation

Educators place a high value on the interaction between students and teachers. The amount of verbal interaction in the classroom is often highly valued, while silence is viewed as evidence of inactivity. In spite of the growing attention given to silence in the classroom by educators and scholars, little research has been conducted on how Vietnamese students respond to silence. This study surveyed 132 engineering students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology to explore the reasons behind low levels of oral participation. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of students' towards classroom silence and suggest several implications for improving students' participation. Preliminary findings suggest that students commonly use silence to gain more thinking time and avoid embarrassment. These insights could inform strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Introduction

For several decades, silence has been viewed paradoxically, as both a positive pedagogical approach and a negative method of control. Silence is often interpreted as a sign of non-engagement in this "talky culture" (Glenn, 2014, p. 18). Certain scholars propose that active engagement in the classroom is highly desirable while passive participation is inferior (Canary & MacGregor, 2008). As well, Ollin (2008) and Hao (2011) emphasize that, in an educational environment, speaking under the teacher's control constitutes inappropriate silent behavior on the part of the student.

Nevertheless, several scholars have argued that a lack of verbal communication, or silence, may not always be detrimental to learning. In this "wait time," as defined by Zembylas and Micaelides (2004, p. 200), more opportunities for reflection and contemplation are given. During a period when students are required to think, Ollin (2008) notes that they should refrain from being intrusive, immediately responsive, or intervening with those around them. Additionally, silence can contribute to second language acquisition by providing a better environment for "attentive listening, thinking, and reformulating ideas" (Harumi, 2020, p. 39).

Though heavily influenced by Confucian principles, Vietnamese education, especially in the EFL community, has employed a variety of cutting-edge and creative pedagogical strategies.

Among EFL forums, workshops, and seminars, the communicative method is a common theme that emphasizes verbal participation to encourage students' participation. As a result, teachers in Vietnamese EFL classrooms do not commonly encourage silence as a method of participating in class (Bao & Nguyen, 2020). Instead, silence is viewed as a sign of respect and a routine part of students' behavior rather than an indication of engagement.

Due to a lack of literature on silence in Vietnamese classrooms, the researcher aims to study students' perspectives on the implications of their silence and its effects on their learning. Hopefully, this study may provide valuable insights into the role of silence and offer meaningful recommendations to enhance classroom discourse quality.

Literature Review

Class interaction and classroom participation

According to Wells (1981), *interaction* is a form of communication that involves the active participation of both a sender and a receiver in a specific context. It differs from other forms of communication because its dynamic nature makes it a vital part of the various social and educational settings within which it is embedded. In the classroom, interaction refers to a positive relationship between the teacher and the student, in which the teacher plays a significant role in cultivating a conducive educational environment. Based on Vygotsky's (1962) theory, students are more likely to reach proficiency in a foreign language if they feel like they belong to and are engaged in a comfortable and sociable environment.

For academic research, classroom participation is often treated as an indication of students' attendance. Zhou et al. (2021) point out, however, that there is a strong correlation between classroom participation and interaction since classroom participation should be interpreted more broadly than just the behavior of students during academic sessions. In addition to sending a query, responding to classmates, engaging in group discussions, or giving feedback, students may also offer suggestions. The term "classroom participation" will be used in this study as much as it embraces Zhou's definition.

Students' silence

Several communicative connotations are associated with students' silence, making its definition increasingly ambiguous. As a result of this complexity, scholars and practitioners have engaged in much controversy and debate.

Several critics of students' silence describe it as a lack of responsiveness, inattention, and disengagement on the part of students (Nakane, 2007; Choi, 2015). Silence in the classroom context, as defined by Bruneau (2008, p. 78), is not just an absence of communication but a refraining from speaking and a lack of interaction with others. As Granger (2004) highlighted, silence among students can sometimes be interpreted as acts of defiance, conflict, or misconduct. Students' silence may be seen as a passive response to a teacher's authority and a method of conveying negative emotions. In other words, silence in the classroom can also be regarded as a manner in which students indirectly communicate their emotional resistance to a teacher's authority.

In comparison, a number of studies have emerged, showcasing the benefits of silence in an educational setting. Liu (2002) describes this phenomenon as a means of exhibiting respect towards both educators and classmates. Meanwhile, Meyer (2009) refers to this approach as an alternative form of communication. Silence is not interpreted as a lack of thought or interaction but rather as a tool for communication that can elicit responses and improve understanding

(Harumi & King, 2020).

Based on Kurzon's (2007) definition, there are two main types of students' silent behaviour: intentional and unintentional silences. As the name implies, intentional silence is an act performed consciously, whereas unintentional silence results from unconscious processes, often triggered by a strong emotion such as anxiety or shame.

The role of students' silence in classroom participation

It is common for students to be expected to participate in class orally, which promotes the teacher's commitment to the teaching session and determines whether the class period has been successful. In addition to a quiz or test, direct responses from students in the classroom can also be indicative of how they perceive and interpret what they have learned. Additionally, it enables teachers to adjust their teaching strategies at the right time to facilitate the process of learning and teaching. As a result, students' silence may be underestimated when it comes to the learning process.

In comparison, Dao et al. (2021) demonstrate that students' engagement is closely related to their silence in that silence is essential to a student's ability to achieve a higher degree of academic success. As explained by Guerrero (1999), learners' brains are stimulated in different ways during the learning process, which is characterized by seven major components: generating thoughts, recalling words, composing written language, applying linguistic principles, monitoring and correcting the use of language, imagining communication with others, and engaging in inner discourse. Simply put, silence facilitates the cognitive process and the internalization of language input during quiet periods. Students must also devote additional time to reflection and idea generation in order to understand complex information (Nijstad et al., 2010). Bao and Ye (2020) also point out that students resort to silence when confronting subjects they have no prior experience with since their ability to contemplate and draw upon previous experiences may be limited.

Additionally, mental processing plays a vital role in language rehearsal. During verbal communication, individuals employ linguistic self-repair mechanisms, such as pauses, hesitations, retracings, and corrections. It is important to note that this correction process occurs internally, within the individual's mind (Goodwin, 1981). Learners typically engage in self-talk, also known as metatalk or inner speech, for a significant duration before being able to express accurate and meaningful utterances (Guerrero, 1999). Therefore, allocating sufficient time for thoughtful engagement can enhance the quality of language output. This aligns with Tatar's (2005) observation that the silence of L2 students reflects their ability to concentrate and process information rather than a lack of competence. Likewise, Teng (2009) suggests that college students' silence in a classroom can indicate their level of cognition, emotions, and actions. Although this may lead to reduced participation, it does not necessarily imply that students are not contemplating the topic under discussion.

The effective use of silence in preparation for a verbal discourse can significantly enhance students' ability to listen actively and think critically. According to King et al. (2020), intentional silence provides students with the opportunity to review and enhance their thoughts, which is beneficial to their anxiety management. It has also been found that students in a less anxiety-prone environment are more likely to engage in classroom activities (King, 2014).

As a matter of fact, students' silence is common at the university in Vietnam. Having observed frequent students' silence, Vietnamese college teachers may have experienced some anxiety and insecurity, resulting in doubts about the effectiveness of pedagogical practices and students' behavior interpretations. Hence, to help students become less inhibited, it is crucial to

understand what causes speaking anxiety among non-major English students and what teachers can do to support students' learning experiences.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the study's purpose, the following questions were addressed:

1. What factors contribute to students' tendency to remain silent?
2. Is it reasonable to consider silence as an indication of non-participation?

Methods

Participants

The study was conducted on 132 engineering students from three different classes at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology. The participants all spoke Vietnamese natively and had a pre-intermediate level of proficiency in English. In accordance with the results of the placement test administered prior to the course, students were randomly assigned to three different classes, thus ensuring the validity and reliability of the study.

Design of the Study

This study utilized a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design that involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Through the online survey, the researcher first collected the quantitative data from the participants. In the second phase of the research process, qualitative data were collected through the semi-structured interview to elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase and provide a general understanding of how the research problem can be approached. Due to its straightforward nature and excellent opportunities for further exploration of the quantitative results, this research design was highly regarded among scholars as, through qualitative analysis, quantitative results may be refined and explained by considering the perspectives of the participants (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2003).

Data collection

This study used a systematic 30-item questionnaire in order to collect reliable quantitative data on students' intentions and interpretations of silence. As Gillham (2000) noted, questionnaires can facilitate the rapid and efficient collection of large amounts of data. As part of the survey, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Students participated in this research voluntarily and anonymously, and their participation did not affect their grades in any way. As a next step, the data obtained was analyzed using SPSS 20.0 and then presented in Microsoft Excel for further generalization.

After completing the questionnaire, ten students were interviewed in a semi-structured manner in order to establish a sense of partnership between the researcher and the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A random sample of students was selected from the list of students who indicated a willingness to participate in an individual interview on a voluntary basis. In order to gain a deeper understanding of their beliefs and attitudes regarding the in-class silence, the researcher employed open-ended questions and engaged interviewees in discussion to relate their personal experiences to the research topic. Additionally, each participant was further questioned to ensure their answers were comprehensive. The researcher translated the final extracts from Vietnamese interviews into English in the following phases. The interview

transcripts and notes were then transcribed into a digital format in order to discern the students' perspectives on silence. A judicious classification of the remaining statements was then conducted in accordance with the research questions. Following this, all data was meticulously gathered and organized for further analysis.

Findings

This study used descriptive statistics to determine the central tendency results for all factors contributing to students' silence. The analyses were conducted on a sample size of 132, with listwise deletion used to address missing data. Notably, Cronbach's Alpha values were found to range from over 0.8 to nearly 1.0, indicating a high level of internal consistency for the scale applied in this study. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the scale is reliable and valid for the assessment of students' silence. Additionally, the interview findings underwent meticulous analysis in alignment with the research questions. The thorough analysis involved comparing the results with those obtained from the questionnaires to identify similarities and differences, aiming to understand the findings comprehensively and derive meaningful implications later on.

Quantitative data

The data presented in Table 1 describes factors that may impede or discourage students from actively engaging in class discussions.

Table 1

Factors Contributing to Students' Tendency to Remain Quiet in the Classroom

Variable	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Demand for more thinking time	3.55	.096	1.108
L2 incompetence	3.51	.100	1.149
Shyness	3.11	.102	1.167
Afraid of failure	3.08	.107	1.227
No recognition from teachers	2.51	.101	1.162
No peers' raising hands	2.50	.089	1.023
No invitation from teachers	2.42	.091	1.049
Peers' negative feedback	2.41	.100	1.152
Peer's negative reaction to bad pronunciation	2.40	.104	1.191
Teachers' negative feedback	2.33	.103	1.183

Notably, the highest mean score of 3.55 pertains to the *demand for more thinking time*, indicating that students often feel pressured by the pace of the class and would benefit from additional time to formulate their thoughts. Moreover, the low standard error and deviation suggest a strong consensus among students, highlighting a widespread desire for a more contemplative classroom environment. *L2 incompetence*, with a mean of 3.51, underscores the challenges students face when they lack proficiency in the target language. It emphasizes the crucial role of language competence in students' confidence and ability to contribute verbally in class. Additionally, *shyness* represents another significant barrier, suggesting that personal discomfort in social settings can inhibit students' participation, while the mean score of 3.08 for being *afraid of failure* reveals the impact of performance anxiety on students' willingness to speak up. Lack of recognition from teachers, reluctance to raise hands, and negative social dynamics in the classroom all scored above 2, highlighting the importance of teacher-student interaction and positive classroom dynamics.

Table 2*The Incidents Taking Place when Students Keep Silent*

Variable	Mean		Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	
Put ideas into words	3.92	.063	.721	
Translate	3.79	.071	.811	
Do online search	3.77	.076	.879	
Rehearse mentally	3.75	.081	.928	
Discuss with partners	3.74	.073	.835	
Speak to oneself	3.64	.078	.901	
Write down the answers	3.61	.080	.913	

Table 2 illustrates that students may engage in a variety of activities despite not being verbally involved. This list of activities was not compiled randomly but based on a quick classroom interview conducted by the author at the beginning of each school year with students about learning methods. Students' ability to structure their ideas effectively and prepare themselves to articulate them, even when verbal communication is not available, was reflected in their average score of 3.92 on putting ideas into words. The process of translating texts, conducting online research, performing mental rehearsals, discussing ideas with peers, and talking to oneself are all vital components of consolidating ideas and facilitating internal repetition and material review. Although writing down answers is the least common activity among those listed, it still holds its own with a mean score above the midpoint, demonstrating its importance as a component of student silence activities.

Table 3*Factors Motivating Students to Produce Verbal Output*

	Mean		Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	
Bonus	4.26	.073	.844	
Confirmation	4.17	.078	.892	
L1 use	4.07	.075	.867	
No negative feedback	3.98	.081	.933	
Teachers' recognition	3.98	.072	.824	
Confidence	3.81	.082	.942	
Peers' raising hands	3.80	.084	.969	
Peers' encouragement	3.71	.086	.985	
Peers' admiration	3.53	.080	.920	

The data from Table 3 underscores the effectiveness of extrinsic motivators like bonuses and confirmation in promoting verbal participation in class. *Bonus* emerges as a highly effective motivator, with the highest mean score of 4.26, indicating their universal potency in encouraging student participation. Students also highly value the affirmation of their ideas and answers as well as the comfort and confidence when resorting to their native language or expressing themselves without fear of criticism. Recognition received from teachers is another element that serves as positive reinforcement and validates students' efforts and contributions. Additionally, their peers' conduct can considerably impact their willingness to participate. The encouragement given by peers and the positive reaction observed from their peers' participation serve as other strong motivators for student engagement, underscoring the significance of social support and a collaborative learning environment. *Peers' admiration*, with the lowest mean score of 3.53, appears to have the most minor influence among the listed factors.

Qualitative data

The interview results indicated that a significant majority (80%) of the interviewees considered their active participation in class to be an indication of their maturity in making decisions and their capacity to exercise judgment. However, their primary difficulty appears to be expressing their thoughts appropriately in the target language, which causes them to prioritize thoughtful and meaningful responses over immediate ones. Further, the interviewees identified inherent characteristics as another contributing factor to verbal participation. They clarified that introverts might exhibit quieter and more reserved behaviors, which should not be misinterpreted as passivity or incompetence.

Furthermore, interviewees claimed that silence had a significant positive effect on their knowledge acquisition process as a result of their experiences. They revealed that they are actively engaged in a number of cognitive and preparation activities that make it possible for them to learn and comprehend the material, even when they are silent.

Additionally, the interviewees emphasized the significant role of the reward system, encompassing teachers' marks, compliments, and recognition, in motivating students to articulate their thoughts verbally.

Toan: I find that I am more motivated to present my ideas when there is an incentive, such as a bonus from my teacher....

Phuong: ...My teacher's ability to remember my name instills a sense of being acknowledged and valued....

Several interviewees indicated a preference for being addressed by their names. This preference is not driven by a desire to be coerced into participating but rather stems from a desire to receive attention from teachers, even if they are not the highest-achieving students in the class. They further underscored the importance of cultivating a positive classroom relationship between teachers and students, which fosters a supportive environment for expressing opinions. The feedback from interviewees affirms that they would get motivated to speak in the following situations.

Khanh: ...I love to learn English if the classroom environment is cheerful and my classmates are enthusiastic about participating in discussions...

Son: The teacher provides valuable assistance in refining my pronunciation and acquiring proficiency in L2 expressions....

Que Anh: I love to study English because I never receive criticism or get made fun of...

Discussion

What factors contribute to students' tendency to remain silent?

A significant finding from this study was that most of the students found it more comfortable with the extended preparation time since they were not confident about their ability to speak L2 effectively. L2 competence plays a vital role in influencing students' self-confidence and how they perceive their chances of success. Likewise, Liu (2006) finds that the more proficient students were in English, the less anxious they seemed to be when responding to their teachers. According to Tran (2022), the students' self-perceived language competence also influenced their state of being reluctant to communicate in the second language, leading to a lack of confidence in the language. In light of this finding, there is a need for additional preparation

time, particularly for those with lower proficiency levels.

Additionally, the supportive and encouraging academic environment can serve as a motivating factor for students to speak up more often during class. Tartar (2005) also emphasizes that the climate of the classroom is a dominant factor in determining whether a student is likely to participate. The negative comments made by their peers and the recognition they receive from their teachers are of great concern to students. It is in line with Zhou et al.'s argument (2005) that there is a reluctance among individuals, even those with the correct answer, to respond due to concerns about how their teachers and peers might react. Pabro-Maquidato's research (2021) also indicates that students are uneasy and anxious about their ability to present their ideas, cautious about others' perceptions of their language performance, and concerned that their audience might negatively evaluate their performance.

In addition, the teacher's attitudes in the classroom have a great deal to do with class participation. According to Harumi (2011), students are more likely to respond better to teachers who empathize with the way they utilize silence in class (p. 288). Likewise, Morita (2004) and Kim (2008) also agree that when teachers take a sincere interest in students and acknowledge the contributions they make to their lessons, it is likely to result in an increased sense of belonging in the classroom community and an increase in oral participation.

Is it reasonable to consider silence as an indication of non-participation?

According to Bista (2012), "When students are silent, one cannot assume that they are not learning" (p.81). The study results revealed that the majority of the survey respondents and interviewees valued silence and found it comfortable to prepare their verbal output in quiet moments. Several previous studies have indicated that quiet students utilize silence to gain access to, organize, and absorb new material. Tomlinson (2001) states that learners may develop internalized speech in their target language during the silent period before they are able to communicate verbally. This process also helps learners utilize explicit knowledge of L2 structure to construct utterances (Ellis, 2005) when they encounter difficulties producing language output beyond their current ability. During the learning process, students take initiative and control their learning process (Schacter et al., 2011). It can be reinforced further by Armstrong (2012), who contends that learners are motivated to learn when they have control over both what they are learning and how they are learning it. In this way, learners will benefit most from the process when they are given the opportunity to choose how they wish to learn, as opposed to being directed to learn in a particular manner by their teacher.

According to Fivush (2010), "Talk does not always imply voice," since some students feel more comfortable with a period of silence than making a constant effort to avoid it. Simply put, active engagement does not always require verbal communication (Kim, 2008).

Based on this finding, it may be more appropriate to allow students to remain silent as long as they exhibit other positive signs of active participation instead of forcing them to speak purely for the sake of speaking (Brown, 2008). Rather than forcing students to produce language, speech production should emerge as the acquisition process progresses (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 58). By observing the patterns of classroom participation between the teacher and peers, as well as among peers, students can better understand how to react to such behaviors in the future.

Conclusion

Silence is common in EFL classrooms, stemming from various linguistic, psychological, and interpersonal factors. Despite the misconception that quiet students are disengaged, they exhibit engagement in diverse ways. This perspective aligns with the notion that silence can signify engagement (Bao, 2020) and supports the concept that vocal expression and silence are closely interconnected (Bao, 2019).

Several important pedagogical implications can be derived from this study. In the first instance, silence in the classroom should not be perceived as a source of discomfort or confusion but rather as an opportunity for learning. Silent reflection and mental rehearsal are important strategies for students to internalize information. As a result, instead of feeling ashamed or frustrated in a quiet classroom, teachers should take silence for granted and allow students to process information in the classroom at their own pace. However, to reduce the silent periods, teachers can establish clear learning expectations and set time limits for their students' activities to encourage them to quickly turn inner speech into verbal output. It is also important to provide a supportive educational environment for students in order to motivate them to become more engaged in the classroom. With the willingness to provide support, sympathy towards students' errors, and recognition of students' accomplishments, teachers can efficiently facilitate their students' learning process.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations, especially in terms of sample size, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. As a result, future research may incorporate a broader and more diverse sample of students to yield a more comprehensive and detailed analysis.

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Biodata

Nguyen Trang Dung has been a lecturer of English at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology for just over 15 years. Teaching keeps her brain young, allowing her to continue her journey as a lifelong learner. It was not until obtaining a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Curtin in 2012 that she became aware of the great interest in second language acquisition.


English Language Anxiety in Higher Education: A Case Study of Spanish Students

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: language anxiety – English as a Foreign Language – Francophone

This article examines the anxiety of French-speaking students in the Spanish Department at the University of Yaoundé I (Cameroon) while learning English. We used quantitative and qualitative methods. The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Affective Filter Hypothesis developed by Krashen (2009). The results showed that anxiety is a barrier that negatively affects the learning of English by French-speaking students. Several factors were found to be at the root of this anxiety: language typology, language level, the influence of French, personality, the reactions of others, and beliefs. We also found that students were anxious about learning Spanish, but this anxiety affected them positively. The paper suggests that learners should be in permanent contact with the English language, teachers and students should develop language tolerance by focusing on the message, not the language form, and teachers should include digital technologies to lower anxiety.

Introduction

Anxiety in language learning is gradually becoming a concern for many linguists in many countries. Anxiety happens to have a significant impact on non-native speakers or learners worldwide. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986:128) define language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perception, belief, feeling, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". In the same line, MacIntyre (1999) describes it as a feeling of stress, nervousness, emotional reaction, and worry linked to a second/foreign language. This study aims to investigate English language anxiety in level 2 Francophone students studying Spanish at the University of Yaoundé I. These students are faced with a foreign language and a second official language, which can be a source of anxiety. Foreign language anxiety (or anxiety in foreign or second language learning) is a type of specific anxiety that is related to learning a language in the classroom. Different recent studies have investigated the causes, consequences, and implications of English as a foreign language anxiety in different settings (Goñi-Osácar & Lafuente-Millán, 2022; Fattahi Marnani & Cuocci, 2022; Mao, 2023), but few works have been found in Cameroon in general and for Francophone students of another foreign language (Tumasang, 2021; Sokeng Piewo & Njolaï, 2024). For this study, we used quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative

method, a questionnaire was administered to the students; for the qualitative method, participant observation was used. Finally, some suggestions are made regarding the findings of our study.

Literature review and theoretical framework

This section reviews the manifestations and sources of anxiety, and the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

Manifestations of anxiety

There are many symptoms related to anxiety. Kralova and Petrova (2017) cite Horwitz and Cope (1986) and Hashemi and Abbassi (2013), who identified *sweating, palpitations, trembling, apprehension, worry, fear, threat, difficult concentration, forgetfulness, freezing, going blank, and avoidance behaviour, blushing, perspiration, headache, tension and pain in any part of the body, abnormal verbal behaviour, such as staggered voice, either too fast or too slow speed of speech, rubbing the palms, squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothes, touching objects, stuttering or stammering, poor performance, less interpretativeness, less eye contact because of reading from the paper or screen while giving presentation* among the symptoms that can affect a foreign language learner.

Loan (2022) investigated the causes of anxiety in learning English speaking skills. The findings revealed that the students' self-perceived language competence constitutes a barrier to learning. It also appears that learners behave anxiously when speaking because they want to avoid being corrected by their English teacher.

Tridinanti (2018) evaluated the link between speaking anxiety and self-confidence in EFL learners' speaking achievements in Palembang private universities. He noticed that self-confidence has a significant effect on speaking achievements. Furthermore, he concluded that self-confidence impacts speaking skills more than speaking anxiety, pointed out the importance of self-confidence in an EFL class, and encouraged instructors to help students build self-confidence by creating communication situations in language classes.

Bensalem (2017) investigated foreign language anxiety among trilingual Tunisian students. His findings showed that the classroom was one of the primary sources of anxiety. The other sources of anxiety among the findings were the worry about failing and the apprehension about speaking English. The researcher proved a correlation between foreign language anxiety and performance.

Sadiq (2017) discussed four types of language anxiety: writing anxiety, reading anxiety, speaking anxiety, and listening anxiety. Writing anxiety can be viewed as a negative attitude towards writing skills in a particular language, mainly when it happens to be a foreign language. As cited in Sadiq, Cheng (1997) discovered a negative correlation between foreign anxiety and foreign language writing achievement. According to Cheng (2002), a high level of anxiety makes students avoid written courses. It is also proved that learners who are immensely affected by writing anxiety do not write much in their tests, have problems with concentration, face obstacles in mastering their input, do not easily distinguish sounds and structures, and do not readily recall information. Reading anxiety occurs when learners must read a text in a target language. It influences academic performance in general. It is due to a lack of self-confidence. Speaking anxiety is also caused by the absence of self-assurance. Speaking is essential in communication, and according to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), speaking skills are the most affected by language anxiety. Listening anxiety significantly impacts listening because

listening is the channel through which important input is learned or acquired. So, proficiency in a target language depends on listening skills, which listening anxiety can immensely hinder.

Hayuningtyas (2022) analysed the types of anxiety in undergraduate students of Bahasa dan Sastra Arab Department of IAIN Jember. The research revealed two types of anxiety: Trait anxiety and state/situational anxiety. The first is a stable or permanent type characterising the person, whereas the second is temporal and determined by the context or environment. In the second case, the behaviour or the manifestations vary according to the situation. The researcher also discovered three sources of anxiety in the students: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterised by fear or anxiety about communicating with other people. The fear of failure generally causes test anxiety. The researcher defined it as an "unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has psychological and behaviour behavioural concomitants, and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations" (Dusek 1980, cited in Cubukcu, 2007). The fear of negative evaluation is characterised by bothering about how others will view one's performance and running away from evaluations.

Sources of anxiety

Hashemi (2011) listed some causes of anxiety, among which he mentioned the sociocultural contexts, cultural differences, and social status and self-identity as factors of anxiety. To him, the sense of foreignness of a language itself is already a factor of anxiety. In addition, he argues that the differences in culture are an essential element that can cause anxiety. To better understand this aspect, it is essential to understand the link between culture and language. When the cultural aspects of a language learner do not match those of the target language, it is likely to engender anxiety (Tanveer, 2007). In that sense, Jones (2004) found that culture is a causal factor in Asian contexts. As far as social status and self-identity are concerned, it is revealed that communication can be significantly influenced if there is a great social distance between the interlocutors (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, 1977, cited in Carrier, 1999:70). Pica (1987:4) affirmed that when there is an unequal status between students and teachers, it causes anxiety. Hashemi suggests that the language classroom be made less formal and friendlier to reduce anxiety. Attempting to have an exhaustive list of the sources of anxiety is engaging oneself in a challenging task because they vary from one learner to another, from one region to another, and from one sociocultural context to another.

It was challenging to find works on foreign language anxiety in Cameroon, especially among Francophones taking Spanish as a foreign language as their main course and English as their second official language.

Theoretical framework

Krashen (2009) developed a theory of second language acquisition in the 1980s with five main hypotheses. Our focus is on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which stands on the ground that 'affective variables' play an important role in second language acquisition. According to Krashen (2009:31), there is a strong relationship between affective variables and language acquisition. He believes that learners who do not have an optimal attitude towards acquiring a second language will, at the same time, seek less input and have a solid or high affective filter as the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for acquiring a language. On the contrary, those with a positive or conducive attitude will have more input, and the affective filter will be weak or low. The affective variables identified by Krashen are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of anxiety on the learners' motivation?
2. How does anxiety impact the learners' self-esteem?
3. What are the manifestations of anxiety in the language learning process?

Method

Pedagogical Setting & Participants' linguistic background

This study randomly selected one hundred students of level 2 taking Spanish as a main course and English as a compulsory course for all Francophone students at the University of Yaounde I, which is a public university considered the *mother* of all universities in Cameroon. It investigated language anxiety's causes, extent, and manifestations of learning English. In Cameroon, French and English are the official languages used in administration, education, and daily activities around the ten regions. Alongside these official languages, we have pidgin English (primarily used in the 2 English-speaking regions), *Camfranglais* (a blend of local language, French and English, used mainly by the youths in the 8 French-speaking regions), and more than 200 local languages. The Francophone educational system teaches foreign languages like German or Spanish in *Quatrième*, *Troisième* (third and fourth year of secondary school), *Seconde*, *Première* and *Terminale* (fifth to final year of secondary school for language students). These languages are also offered as courses in two separate departments at the Faculty of Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences of the University of Yaounde I. The official languages are compulsory for all students (French for Anglophones and English for Francophones). Francophone students who choose to study German or Spanish must take English classes.

Design of the Study

The research used a mixed-methods research design: quantitative and qualitative. One hundred students were randomly selected to answer the 20-item questionnaire on anxiety in learning a foreign language.

Data collection and analysis

The content of the questionnaire, based on the variables of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, was about the impact of anxiety on learning English. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections; the first section analysed the motivation of the informants, the second discussed self-confidence and the last anxiety. The researchers also used observation to check the informants' attendance and participation in English classes.

Results

Motivation

This section discusses anxiety in the motivation of the informants regarding learning English.

Table 1

Motivation of Language Learners

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
1	Choice of teaching approach	Use of students' L1	80	Anxiety
		Absence of students' L1	20	No anxiety
		Misunderstanding	54	Anxiety
2	Results of using English only	Poor performance	17	Anxiety
		Good performance	13	No anxiety
		Amelioration of the speaking skills	16	No anxiety

The findings in Table 1 reveal that 80% of teachers prefer to use French during their English classes, and only 20% prefer English. Overall, the performance in English could be better (13%), and only 16% claimed that their speaking skills had improved.

Self-confidence

Questions 3 to 13 examined aspects of self-confidence in learning English, which reflected anxiety.

Table 2

Self-confidence

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
3	Choice of evaluation	Reading comprehension	83	Anxiety
		Oral test	17	No anxiety
4	Options of essay	Submission of write-up	63	Anxiety
		Presentation	37	No anxiety
		Avoidance of mistakes	08	Anxiety
5	Reasons for choosing written evaluation	Fear of mockery	54	Anxiety
		Possibility to max. ideas	32	No anxiety
		Poor performance in Eng.	06	No anxiety
6	Sentiments toward an oral test in the English language	Fear	50	Anxiety
		Unhappiness	30	Anxiety
		Extreme happiness	07	No anxiety
		Happiness	03	No anxiety
7	Options for apologies	Indifference	10	No anxiety
		Written	72	Anxiety

		Spoken	28	No anxiety
		People's reactions	25	Anxiety
		Shame	20	Anxiety
		Lack of self-confidence	22	Anxiety
8	Hindrances to speaking skills	Grammar & reading	13	Anxiety
		Grammar & vocabulary	63	Anxiety
		Pronunciation & reading	07	No anxiety
10	Views about English words	Listening & speaking	10	No anxiety
		Poor vocabulary	33	No Anxiety
		Grammar & speaking	07	No anxiety
		Easy pronunciation	30	No anxiety
		Challenging pronunciation	70	Anxiety
11	Duration for fluency in English	1 year	18	No anxiety
		2 years	16	No anxiety
		3 years	24	Anxiety
		4 years	15	Anxiety
		5 years	12	Anxiety
12	Students' thoughts about their performance after working hard	More than 5 years	15	Anxiety
		From 0 to 4.5	0	Anxiety
		From 5 to 9.5	37	Anxiety
		From 10 to 14.5	32	Anxiety
		From 15 to 20	31	No anxiety
13	Concerns about speaking a language	Correctness	30	Anxiety
		Communicating fluently	38	Anxiety
		Communicating	19	No anxiety
		Being understood	13	No anxiety

The results in Table 2 show that some informants are favourable to anxiety. Concerning the choice of evaluation in Question 3, 83% of learners are affected by anxiety as they opted for reading comprehension over oral text. For essay options (Question 4), 63% chose to submit their write-up rather than to make presentations. Question 5 requested that learners justify their choice of written evaluation. 8 students justified it with the avoidance of making mistakes, which is a sign of anxiety, and 54 students justified their choice of written evaluation with the fear of mockery (which is also a sign of anxiety), thus giving us 62% of learners affected by anxiety. According to Question 6, students' sentiments towards the English language are presented as follows: 50 students for fear and 30 students for unhappiness, thus giving 80% of learners impacted by anxiety. Question 7 indicates that 72% chose written apologies over spoken as a sign of anxiety. Question 8 shows that learners consider the following factors as a hindrance to their speaking skills: people's reaction (25%), shame (20%), and lack of self-confidence (22%), thus giving a total of 67% of learners affected by anxiety. Question 9 investigated anxiety through language skills or lessons; those who avoid oral skills are 76%: we had 63 students who opted for grammar and vocabulary and 13 students for grammar and reading over all the combinations that request spoken English. For Question 10, 70 learners are affected by anxiety due to their view of English words (difficult). In Question 11, learners that require 3 years and above to be fluent in English are those impacted by anxiety (66%). Question

12 indicates that 69% of students need help to reach fluency. The last question, 13, proves that 68% of the respondents are concerned with anxiety.

Anxiety

Questions 14 to 20 examined anxiety in learning English.

Table 3

Anxiety

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
14	Options for job interview	Crowded	22	No anxiety
		Not crowded	78	Anxiety
		Response in English	34	No anxiety
15	Reactions to English speakers	No response	04	Anxiety
		Response in French	26	Anxiety
		Mixing of English and French	36	No anxiety
		Nervousness	23	Anxiety
16	Feeling about the arrival of the English teacher	Worry	25	Anxiety
		Excitement	19	No anxiety
		Indifference	33	No anxiety
		Much excitement	14	No anxiety
		Fear	32	Anxiety
17	Feeling about the announcement of the English test	Worry	15	Anxiety
		Nervousness	15	Anxiety
		Indifference	24	No anxiety
18	Opinions about English words	Difficult to retain	70	Anxiety
		Easy to retain	30	No anxiety
19	Belief about innate ability in English	False	37	No anxiety
		True	63	No anxiety
20	Concerns about speaking a language	Communicating fluently	38	Anxiety
		Correctness	30	Anxiety
		Being understood	13	No anxiety
		Communicating	19	No anxiety

Table 3 reveals that in question 14, 78% of the learners opted for a job interview not crowded (anxiety). In 15, only 30% of learners are concerned with anxiety due to the way they respond to English speakers (no response: 4, response in French: 26). Question 16 enabled us to detect nervousness (23%) and worry (25%) altogether, giving 48%. English test anxiety was detected through the learners' feelings when the test was announced in Question 17 (fear: 32%, worry: 15%, nervousness: 15%), and we got a total of 62%. We also got from Question 18 that 70% of the learners view English words as challenging to retain. Furthermore, Question 19 permits us to understand that 63% of learners believe in the innate ability to do well in English. Finally, the concerns about anxiety in speaking a language were the last components of our diagnosis in Question 20 (30% for correctness and 38% for fluent communication). These last components are valid because focusing on correctness and fluent communication within the learning process is a source of anxiety because they hinder oral improvement.

The quantitative data reveal that out of twenty questions, only two (15 and 16) have less than 50% of learners affected by anxiety within the learning process of English. The rest of the questions vary from 62 to 83 %. This shows that the sample of our study is highly influenced by anxiety.

Participant observation

We observed the behaviour of informants with a focus on their attendance to classes in general (and English in particular) and their attendance to oral evaluations. We also observed their choices of seats in the English classroom. We came out with the following details:

- No motivation noticed through attendance

The students' attendance in English classes is lower than that of the Spanish classes. We had to be present during English and other classes to check whether learners attended English classes. It was noticed that the gap was huge. We could estimate 35 to 40% absentees during English classes.

- Lack of self-confidence through a low attendance to oral evaluation and the shallow voice during oral evaluation

The student's attendance at oral evaluations is lower than that of regular classes. In this case, the oral evaluation of students generally refers to presentations. Students are given topics to work in groups and present in class. The teachers reported that very few students (sometimes half) come for the presentations. There are two possibilities in this case (as the informants reported): some students were absent from work. They did not participate, and others were present and participated but did not come for the presentation because they were afraid to speak in front of the teachers and their classmates. The informants reported many reasons for speaking in a shallow voice, depending on the teacher's position. When the teacher sits on a front bench, the intention is to avoid the mistakes being heard or noticed by the classmates. When the teacher sits on a back bench, the low voice is a sign of a lack of self-confidence in whether the sentence grammaticality is correct, or the pronunciation of the words is correct.

- Anxiety noticeable through the choice of seats

Committed students sit on the front benches, and non-committed students sit on the back benches of the class. This observation may not seem relevant to others, but to an extent, it is essential to mention. Many students avoid front benches to avoid close contact with the language teacher. Generally, teachers quickly call on those in the front benches more often than those in the back. So, to avoid being called on by the teacher to speak or give an answer orally, many students prefer sitting in the back or off to the sides. This observation is not relevant in some cases because some students sit behind because they come late and for other personal reasons.

Discussion

The findings are presented into three groups following Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The effect on motivation

Motivation is fundamental in a learning process. Mehmet (2020) views motivation as '*the mental event that decides the course of action*'. The importance of motivation can be seen through its effect on the learner's autonomy (when it comes to learning) as proven by Nguyen et al (2024). Considering the fact that the new trend of teaching advocates developing autonomy

in learners (particularly when learning a language) to be able to study or work by themselves, the researchers *ibid.* discovered that the desire for greater educational achievements could prompt the students to be more autonomous in their studies.

This study reveals that the absence of the learner's L1 within the teaching and learning process demotivates the learners. They lose interest, fail to understand, and consequently, perform poorly.

The effect on the learners' self-esteem

Sedikides & Gress (2003) viewed self-esteem as the individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's self-worth, one's feeling of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative view about self. Abeer (2023) proves that the correlation between the students' anxiety and their self-esteem is a negative one. He posits that when the learners' anxiety drops, their self-esteem increases. In our study, a lack of self-confidence characterises anxiety, and this brings about the following:

- most students avoid spoken activities and oral evaluations to opt for written activities and written evaluations;
- learners are overwhelmed by fear, unhappiness, worry, and nervousness when an activity or evaluation is to take place orally;
- the more crowded the class is, the more anxious the students become; anxiety increases as the environment becomes more populated.
- students underestimate themselves as far as their capacity to gain proficiency is concerned, which means anxiety does not only concern the speaking skills but the learning process and performance in both written and spoken English;
- people/classmates' reactions are one of the significant causes of anxiety;
- many students care much about the correctness of their sentences while communicating in the target language.

The effect on anxiety

According to Abeer (2023), anxiety is considered a negative factor that can control the way a person deals with learning. The author cites some works (Brown 2007; Liu & Huang 2011; Samimy & Rardin 1994) viewing anxiety as one among the most powerful affective predictors of learners' performance and competence.

In our study, anxiety is also characterised by an influence on the learners' beliefs and behaviour within the teaching and learning context:

- students think about divine or innate abilities;
- students' attendance in the English class is lower than that of Spanish classes;
- many students speak in a low voice as a sign of inhibition;
- some students sit on the back benches as a sign of inhibition;
- students view English words as challenging to retain and pronounce;
- students develop negative attitudes towards the target language speakers.

Observing our findings and comparing the students' performances and attitudes towards English and Spanish, we realise that some disparities are linked to the language typology, the input, the impact of the L1, personality, people's reactions, and beliefs.

Language typology or the linguistic distance

Linguistic distance here has to do with the typology of different languages. For instance, foreign language learners of a particular language can feel intensely anxious when learning a language of a different typology or origin. Thus, one can understand if a Francophone feels more comfortable learning Spanish than English. Like many other researchers, Kralova and Petrova (2017) noted that the typological distance between languages increases anxiety in foreign language. This goes on the same line as Robert's (2004) view that the acquisition/learning of a foreign language greatly depends on the proximity between the target language and their L1. In Cameroon, one will realise that some Francophone language learners feel less anxiety when learning Spanish than when learning English. This is because French, their L1, shares the same origin as Spanish (Indo-European derived from Latin), whereas English is an Indo-European Germanic language. Here, the difference lies more in the writing systems. So, we can affirm that the proximity of the writing system between Spanish and French may bring less anxiety than the distance between French and English.

Language input

Language input is of great significance to language learning. Krashen (1985) showed it with the input hypothesis. He posited that the best way to make learners acquire a language is to supply them with comprehensible input in low-anxiety situations. Here, the number of language items is significant. The less a learner is in contact with the language input, the more likely he/she is to behave anxiously when communication is required. Even if more and more Anglophone Cameroonians use French for different reasons (Ze Amvela, 1999; Fonka, 2014; Atechi, 2015; Kouega, 2002), Francophone Cameroonians do not use English at the same pace due to some social, cultural, or psychological barriers.

Nevertheless, we must specify that the input that Francophones in Cameroon are exposed to in English is less than that of Anglophones in French; the population of both languages is enough to help understand (8 Francophone and 2 Anglophone regions). Some Francophone learners of English get in contact with their target language only in a classroom, whereas French is spoken widely. It is not easy to come up with an exhaustive list of the causes of anxiety because it depends on factors like geographical spheres, social aspects, and linguistic and cultural differences from one region or country to another. Hashemi (2011) posited that because of limited exposure in a country like Iran, language learners face serious difficulties that hinder learning foreign languages.

The L1 impact

The L1 impact here refers to the influence of the learner's behaviour that is created by the linguistic background he/she has received from his/her first language. Jarvis (2007) states that "*as a theoretical construct, conceptual transfer can be characterised as the hypothesis that certain instances of crosslinguistic influence in a person's use of one language originate from the conceptual knowledge and patterns of thought that the person has acquired as a speaker of another language.*" It is referred to as the Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis. However, in our analysis, the L1 impact has two components: the L1 learning/acquisition system and the communication focus. Let us take the first one; if a student has acquired his/ her L1 based on the form, he/she will tend to learn the target language based on the form, which can have a negative impact. Learning a language based on grammaticality usually prevents students from making fast progress because of the tendency to be willing to make correct sentences so that the interlocutor will not notice the mistakes. There is this fear of making mistakes that constitutes a blockage. This is the case with our informants. French is taught based on the form

or grammaticality, and students try to transfer that system to their English language learning process. The second aspect is the focus when communicating in the target language. There are two aspects in an interaction: the message and the form. If a learner focuses on the message, there will be less anxiety. However, if his/her focus is on the form of language, he/she will automatically be bothered about people's reactions to the language form.

Personality

Many researchers have shown the link between personality and language learning/acquisition. Krashen's Affective filter hypothesis is one of the main points that are linked to personality. Schutz (2019) comments on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis by positing that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion can be more fit to succeed in second language acquisition. The majority of these factors are personality traits. Cook (2001), also points out the link (positive) extrovert learners have with the communicative approach. It has been demonstrated that extrovert language learners are predisposed to quick success in oral communication and language learning. However, introverted learners are overwhelmed mainly by shyness, which is a factor of anxiety. Raamkhumar et al. (2024) while establishing the relationship between personality traits and language learning, posit that personality plays a significant role in language learning. To them, extraversion is also the trait that is most conducive to language learning because students with this trait tend to be more sociable and outspoken.

People's reaction

Let's introduce this factor with one of the 'principles of accommodation' revised and expanded by Giles et al. (2023) stipulating that people can reduce social distance by using more accommodative acts for a positive outcome when they wish. Indeed, this is not directly connected to the language situation, but it matches with people's reaction to language utterances. Yang & Zhao (2017) highlight the role of interlocutor in second language and come up with four aspects:

- The interlocutor's social status,
- The interlocutor's familiarity with the speaker,
- The interlocutor's target language proficiency and,
- The appropriateness of feedback (which matches perfectly with our context)

This last aspect (appropriateness of feedback), according to the authors, does not refer to a straight *yes* or *no* reaction to a learner's utterance. Firstly, they argue that *direct, sharp even rude corrections* can cause the interruption of the speaker's thinking process and can also end his/her communication which would affect the student or the learner's performance. Secondly, they state that in such situations, there can be a negative impact on the learner's self-esteem and willingness to speak.

It is expected that some teachers, learners, or students will react very poorly towards an interlocutor whose utterance needs to be grammatically correct. Many do that ignorantly, but it affects and prevents many learners from progressing in their learning process. What generally causes anxiety in some language learners is the way people react. Some interlocutors are fond of laughing at those who utter wrong sentences or words that are not grammatically correct. In a classroom context, both the teacher and the classmates are a cause of anxiety because of the

way they react when someone speaks. Among the negative attitudes, we can talk of laughing (this ultimately discourages some shy learners), exclaiming, mocking, murmuring, and shouting.

From a general perspective, both a positive and negative reactions can impact the learning process according to the various types. The importance of a positive feedback is demonstrated by Dinh & Pham (2024). Their study shows that praises and suggestions raised the awareness of language proficiency, had a great impact on the students' motivation and facilitated the interaction between the teacher and the student.

Students' beliefs

The main idea about students' belief in this study is that the ability to gain proficiency in the English language is innate. Dewaele (2002), while listing *learner variables* as sources of anxiety, also mentioned noticeable beliefs in our study; some believe that to be proficient in English, one needs to have that capacity in the genes. That fact cannot be denied, but in our context, this awareness prevents students from working hard to ameliorate their language skills because of a barrier in their minds. This awareness brings about laxity, laziness, and total abandon for others. Boakye (2016) emphasises c According to her, the learner's '*belief*' and strategy have a great impact on the learning process. She postulates that no matter the efforts put in place by the teacher, if there are erroneous beliefs in the learner's mind, the result will hardly be positive.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate anxiety in Francophone learners of English. We chose Spanish 2 students from the University of Yaoundé I. We used both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. In the first place, the results enable us to postulate that there is a strong connection between anxiety and motivation in the sense that the absence of L1 engenders demotivation, which gives existence to anxiety within the teaching and learning process. Secondly, it appears that anxiety is characterised by a negative impact on the learners' self-esteem. Finally, it is observed that anxiety is also characterised by an influence on the learners' beliefs and behaviour within the teaching and learning context. The discussion in this work indicates that the differences in language typology, the lack of necessary input, the L1 impact, personality, people's reactions, and students' beliefs contribute massively to increasing anxiety in the student's process of learning English.

Although the research was conducted in a public university and a specific department, the findings are significant and worth considering. However, future research should venture into private higher institutions with fewer students or consider other language departments. Moreover, this study relies more on a questionnaire and observation as research instruments, so it might be interesting for future research to get the individual points of view of students and teachers to provide a well-rounded understanding of the problem.

Our suggestions against English language anxiety faced by our informants will be based on their realities. We have observed that one of the primary sources of anxiety is the lack of necessary input in the English language. Their contact with the language is rare, which significantly impacts them. English is taught once a week for two hours. Permanent contact with a language can significantly contribute to building a low-anxiety class. A gap will be filled if students constantly or regularly get in touch with English. This will make them familiar with the language, and the words of the language will not look strange to them. They must be

brought closer to English because, in the present situation, there is a great distance between the language and the learners. This can be done by adding a Spanish course taught in simple English since most enjoy their Spanish classes. This is possible because English is one of their official languages; it is a global language (Crystal, 2009). The more they will learn the words of the language, the more they will gain confidence. However, a challenge remains: How do we make students attend English language classes? Teachers and students must be sensitised on how to come up with classes free from anxiety. We have discussed the impact of people's reactions towards the learners or other learners. How people react when learners utter ungrammatical or wrong sentences can discourage or positively impact the speaker. Both teachers and students must develop a specific language tolerance towards their students and classmates. The manner of approach to correct mistakes or errors has a significant role to play in the learning process. Suppose language teachers and students develop language tolerance. In that case, it will be easy to cultivate the focus on the message for learners and reduce the focus on language form because the latter is also a significant source of anxiety for Francophone learners of English.

Another suggestion is the introduction of digital technologies in the teaching of English. Digital technologies offer access to material in a second/foreign language. Watching video, audio, or text, using interactive games or platforms can engage students in class. Using interactive platforms like Wooclap, MOODLE, or other digital media like Instagram can help learners lower their anxiety. As learners become less worried about learning English, they become more confident and willing to communicate using English (Makodamayanti, Nirmala, and Kepirianto, 2020).

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Medium of Instruction: The Context of Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Level in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: MoI, EMI, BMI, ethnic minority students, social, cultural and economic effects

Medium of instruction (MoI) has turned into a matter of dispute in post-colonial societies for various conditions, such as favoring foreign languages over local or native tongues, enacting monolingual laws in multilingual communities, and creating inconsistencies between education policies and practices. This study aims to give a critical overview of MoI policies and practices from primary to higher secondary levels and their social, economic, and cultural effects in Bangladesh. The study employed a systematic literature review approach as part of secondary research. The study finds Bangla as a medium of instruction (BMI) by de jure and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) by de facto, which results in a remarkable inconsistency between MoI policies and its existing practices in the education sector. The further notable finding suggests that the mismatch between MoI policies and its practices leads to a disparate education structure and, eventually, a stratified society marked by inequalities, social hierarchies, marginalization, and so on. More importantly, the inequalities characterized by MoI practices are twofold: on the one hand, EMI is a source of division and inequalities for the Bangla-medium students, and on the other, BMI acts similarly when it comes to ethnic minority students. This research seeks to provide insights for policymakers to address the issues arising from the inconsistencies between MoI policies and practices.

Introduction

MoI refers to the language used in schools to implement the curriculum (Puteh, 2012). In other words, it encompasses the language of teaching and assessment. The political and historical narratives of a nation have had a significant impact on MoI policies throughout history. The colonial heritage of English and its status as "an unstoppable language juggernaut" had an effect on social, cultural, and political developments around the world. (Demont-Heinrich, 2005, p. 80, as cited in Sultana, 2014; Haidar and Fang, 2019). Therefore, English has emerged as a popular choice for the MoI in many educational institutions across the non-Inner Circle

(Brumfit, 2004). The existing literature of EMI found English not just a tool of employment opportunities and social prestige but also a way of liberation from poverty and social marginalization among the indigenous groups, as in the case of the English Goddess' movement among Dalits in India, who believe that the knowledge of English would give liberation (Rao, 2017). However, EMI proved to be an obstacle to high-quality education, which reproduces disparities for students from minority groups. This is supported by several reports from South Asian nations, including Bhattacharya (2013) and Erling et al. (2016) for India, Haidar and Fang (2019) and Rashid et al. (2016) for Pakistan, Karki (2018), Phyak (2013), and Sah and Li (2018) for Nepal (as cited in Sah & Karki, 2023). Alarming, EMI has become a source of social division and inequalities in many countries between the elite and the 'Englishless masses', namely in the Philippines, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, India, Hong Kong, and so on (Tollefson, 2000; Li, 2002; Bhatt et al., 2005; Kamwangmalo, 2007 as cited in Sultana, 2014). Given the situation, MoI policies can also be a way of emancipation in a country, as in New Zealand, where the introduction of inclusive MoI policies saved the Maori, the local language, from extinction. (May 2004, as cited in Sultana, 2014).

In Bangladesh, Bangla is the national language, and it is spoken by 98% of the population. In this context, MoI is selected on a national stance by Bangla being designated as 'the medium of instruction at all levels of education' (Ministry of Education, 1974, as cited in Hamid et al., 2013). Specifically, at the primary (grades 1- 5), secondary (grades 6-10), and higher secondary levels (grades 11-12) of schooling, the prime language of instruction is Bangla (Rahman et al., 2019). However, like other non-Inner Circle countries in South Asia, MoI is one of the most contested issues in Bangladesh, as the disparity between MoI policies and practices led by distinctive language ideologies creates a socio-economically and culturally divided society. There have been several studies on MoI policies as a source of socioeconomic division between private and public university students (e.g., Ramanathan, 2005; Sultana, 2014; Hamid & Jahan, 2015; Hamid and Baldauf, 2014; Rahman et al., 2019; Hamid and Erling, 2016). This situation raises the question of whether this kind of division marked by existing MoI practices is also notable in Bangladesh's primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of education. Thus, this study aimed to explore MoI policies and practices in the context of primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of schooling and how these policies and practices affect society, the economy, and culture in Bangladesh.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the MoI policies from primary to higher secondary levels in Bangladesh?
2. Are the MoI policies and practices consistent from primary to higher secondary levels?
3. How do MoI policies and practices at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels impact society, the economy, and culture in Bangladesh?

Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to synthesize existing research on the topic of MoI. The researcher conducted a comprehensive search of academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, using relevant keywords such as MoI in South Asian Nations, MoI in higher education and primary and secondary levels, EMI, language-in-education policy, and minority languages. Additionally, the researcher manually searched the reference lists of key articles to identify additional relevant sources. The

inclusion criteria for articles consisted of qualitative or mixed-methods articles conducted between 2003 and 2024. Thematic analysis was used to synthesize findings across the existing studies through an iterative coding and categorization process, guided by the research objectives. The literature's patterns, trends, and contradictions are examined to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Historical Overview of MoI in Bangladesh

MoI policies cannot be decontextualized from their socio-political history, as MoI policies are always influenced by the changing dynamics of a polity's social and political settings (Hamid et al., 2016). To begin with, during the colonial period of the Indian subcontinent, English-medium education was introduced for the privileged natives to facilitate and lengthen colonial rule. (Hamid, 2009, as cited in Hamid et al., 2013). After partition, English remained the language of international communication in multilingual India and Pakistan (Imam, 2005). After the long nine-month war, East Pakistan gained independence in 1971, and Bangla was recognized as the national language in newly-formed Bangladesh (Banu & Sussex, 2001, as cited in Hamid & Erling, 2016), replacing the use of English as the official language. Rahman (1991, p. 47, cited in Hamid et al., 2013) noted, "English, hitherto dominating the educated, commercial, and social scene, was relegated, due to a shift in emphasis and national outlook, to a secondary position." According to the 1974 Commission, Bangla is to be "the official language of communication as well as the medium of instruction in all state academic institutions" (Mohsin, 2003, p. 98). Later, "education commissions issued in 1987, 1997, and 2000 reiterated the 1974 Reports emphasis on Bangla and recommended that Bangla be the 'sole' medium of instruction" (Hossain, 2007, p. 250, as cited in Rahman, 2010). Here, the MoI is chosen based on the national sentiments of Banglees, which have a direct connection with the Bangla language. Article 9 of the Constitution defines 'Bengali nationalism' as 'the unity and solidarity of the Bengali nation, which, deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengali nationalism' (Government of Bangladesh, 1972, p. 5, as cited in Rahman, 2010). Unlike other education policies, the recent National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010 prioritized ethnic minority languages pledging instruction in the mother tongues of indigenous peoples and small ethnic groups at the primary level of education since it aims for equitable access to primary education "irrespective of ethnicity, socioeconomic conditions, physical or mental challenges, and geographical differences" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 5). Measures such as the recruitment of teachers from ethnic groups and preparing texts in indigenous languages are recommended to be adopted to ensure a non-discriminating education system and to facilitate learning. Notably, first language-based instruction is only enacted for the early years of education, i.e., the primary level, whereas Bangla remains the sole MoI for the secondary and higher secondary levels of education in Bangladesh.

The Role of English in Post-Independent Bangladesh

Though the role of English was relegated by Bangla being 'designated as the official, representative language of the nation' and 'mandated' for use within formal domains' in a newly independent nation, the use of English reappeared for several reasons soon after (Thompson, 2007, p. 6). First, as a language of prestige and advancement, English drew the attention of affluent people who could not get over the colonial mentality. Imam (2005) noted, "The national elites continue to invest privately, as they always have, in the English language and culture." Since then, the number of English-medium schools has been increasing. Furthermore, with the globalization of English, the government of Bangladesh took some operative initiatives to

promote the English language, such as introducing English as a compulsory subject in the 1–12 national curriculum, introducing the English version following the curriculum of primary and secondary education boards, and improving English teaching and learning through donor-funded language projects. More importantly, the language ideologies of Bangladesh shifted from nationalistic fervor to global utility since the president of Bangladesh stated, ‘To promote employment abroad and encourage the transfer of technology, emphasis will be laid on teaching the English language along with the mother tongue’ (The Daily Observer, 2002, as cited in Imam, 2005). Finally, the use of English became widespread due to implicit MoI policies in Bangladesh. No explicit policy regarding the status of English is formed at the macro level. Consequently, the micro-context actors are implementing MoI policies that align with their advantages. Fang (2018) and Hu (2019) noted that the unplanned implementation of the MoI policy has negative effects on the educational outcomes of learners in non-native English contexts.

The Disparate Education Structure

The colonial history, privatization of education, shifted language ideologies, and inconsistent MoI policies made mainstream education in Bangladesh complex, dissecting it into three different sectors: Bangla-medium, English-version, English-medium, and Madrasah, or religious instruction for Muslims (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007, p. 251). Firstly, the Bengali medium follows the national education curriculum, which caters to above 80% of the school-age population, and Bangla is the MoI at the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of schooling. In this stream, all the subjects are taught in Bangla except English. The tuition fees are lower in the Bangla-medium stream (Sultana, 2014). There is another stream within the Bangla-medium education system called the English version. The curriculum followed in English-version schools is generally aligned with the national curriculum of Bangladesh but with the language of instruction in English. The tuition fees in this stream are slightly higher than in Bangla-medium. English-version schools are recognized by the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh and are seen as a pathway for students who prefer English as the medium of instruction over Bengali (Bangla). Thirdly, the English-medium schools follow the Cambridge International Examination Board conducted by the British Council in Dhaka. The whole teaching and learning process is conducted in English in this stream. It caters to 10% of the population. The system is “totally different and isolated from the nationally accepted curriculum” (Chakrabarti, 2002, as cited in Hamid & Jahan, 2015). The teaching and learning environment is resourceful with qualified teachers, as this stream charges very high tuition fees. Finally, the religious education sector is regulated by the state-recognized Madrasa Education Board, where general education is provided alongside Islamic education using both Bangla and Arabic as MoI. Though the curriculum of the religious stream is unified with general education, the quality of teaching and learning in the madrasa education is not as good as in general education. Asadullah et al. (2007) found that religious school students have lower competency in mathematics and English than secular students. In a nutshell, the gaps marked by disparate MoI policies among the different streams of education are creating a socio-economically and culturally stratified society.

EMI and its Consequences

Social Consequences

Over the last two decades, EMI has drawn the attention of researchers in making an impact on the individual, societal identities, and social division (e.g., Annamalai, 2004; Tsui, 2004; Ramanathan, 2005; Sadhu, 2010; as cited in Hamid et al., 2013).

Language and Identity

Language is coupled with identity as people express themselves through language (Montero, 2007; Hall et al., 2008, as cited in Sultana, 2014). Historically, English has been linked to a prestigious identity as a language of the ruling class, and comparatively, Bangla and indigenous languages are associated with lower status in our society. Eventually, disparate MoI practices in our education system result in dual social identities where English-medium students belong to the 'us (self) and Bangla-medium students to 'them' (other) (Hamid et al., 2013). The condition is worse when language-based social identity determines access to social benefits.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital refers to the values and advantages associated with language proficiency, specifically proficiency in the prestigious language. Even individuals' competence in and access to a prestigious language can impact their social status. As Bourdieu (1991) remarks, linguistic capital plays a fundamental role in positioning people in different social hierarchies.

In the Bangladeshi context, English, as a prestigious variety, acts as a linguistic capital that reproduces social stratification. To illustrate, when English-medium students engage in conversation, it represents their higher social status. Their spontaneous English communication shows their competence (Sultana, 2014). Bangla-medium students belong to the middle class as they are less fluent in the linguistic capital. Based on this stratification, students' knowledge and life experiences are neglected, which leads to lower self-esteem. Tsui (1996) found that many students associate English with failure, frustration, and low self-esteem. This linguistic capital is intangible yet powerful, as it defines people's social position.

Assumption Nexus

Bangladeshi people hold very positive attitudes towards fluent English speakers. English-educated Bangladeshi speakers prefer to showcase their English language skills, as English holds the values of status, culture, education, and intelligence (Rahman, 2005). Majidi (2013, as cited in Khanh, 2022), stated that people around the world prefer to use English in a global context due to its sociocultural supremacy. These beliefs and practices are called the assumption nexus. In other words, 'assumption nexus' refers to "a complete set of beliefs and practices that make people believe in the superiority of a specific language-speaking population" (Ramanathan, 2005). These beliefs and practices lead to relegating people to disadvantaged positions. For instance, English-medium students tend to display their lack of proficiency in Bangla as a matter of pride (Sultana, 2014), and Imam (2005) noted that English-medium pupils ridicule Bangla-medium students for their poor English skills.

Community of Practice

Community of Practice (COP) encompasses "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor." (Eckert et al., 1992, p. 464). Wenger (1998) stated that their participation influences individual learning in the Community of Practice (COP). According to the COP framework, the more one is involved in the social practices of COP, the more he or she has the opportunity to learn. However, in our society, competency in English determines individuals' access to COP. Sultana (2017, as cited in Sultana, 2014) found that students from English-medium backgrounds have greater access to class discussions than those from Bangla. Notably, the majority of students with a Bangla-medium background opined that they go unnoticed by the teacher due to their lack of English competency.

Economic Consequences

With the growing demand for English, it is regarded as a tool for economic advantage in present-day Bangladesh. Particularly, stakeholders in non-English-speaking countries such as China (Botha, 2015; Hu & Lei, 2014; Zhang, 2018), South Korea (Evans, 2017), and Malaysia (Ali & Hamid, 2018) believe English will bring several benefits locally and will offer global opportunities (cited in Rahman et al., 2019). Khanh (2022) found that Vietnamese university students are highly motivated to learn English due to its better job opportunities, and English can help them gain a great advantage over the competition in different aspects of life, including study, work, and promotion. However, a specific language with instrumental values can create an economically stratified society if it is not accessible to all the members of the society. In our society, English-medium education is expensive and only accessible to the affluent. Though English is also taught to students in Bangla as a required subject, the quality of English teaching is so below standard that students pursuing a Master's degree in Bangla are unable to speak decent English (Hamid and Jahan, 2015). The primary education system is mainly criticized for students' poor English skills.

Even though the situation is worse in rural Bangladesh (Hamid, 2009, as cited in Hamid et al., 2013). Weak infrastructure, a lack of teaching and learning resources, and unqualified English teachers are the causes of poor learning outcomes in rural areas. The overall quality of teaching and learning in schools has already been pointed out as poor (Ali & Walker, 2014; Rahman et al., 2018), where English-medium students still need to improve Bangla, and Bangla-medium students need more English skills. Eventually, a job seeker from a Bangla-medium background lags in the competitive job market where English is required as a 'must' to get hired (Afrin, 2020).

Cultural Consequences

The disparate MoI practices in our education system promote only the respective culture, resulting in a cultural knowledge gap among students of different streams. Imam (2005) remarked that English-medium students are good at Roman, Greek, or Chinese history but are barely familiar with their national history. Similarly, Haque (2009) noted that English-medium education does not promote Bangladeshi culture; even teachers do not bother to relate foreign texts to it as it would cost their time and go against their curriculum; these practices engender cultural imperialism. According to Phillipson (1992), promoting British trade books is the best mode of cultural imperialism (as cited in Haque, 2009). Cultural imperialism can also terminate in cultural recolonization. As Imam (2005) noted, English-medium students read foreign writers' books that exhibit ideas, values, and attitudes ingrained in western culture, and therefore, they acquire English as a set of values, which is a sort of cultural recolonization.

BMI and its Consequences

The National Education Commission reports issued before 2010 were solely based on the 98% of people in Bangladesh who speak Bangla, leaving out 2% of the population, equal to two million people who speak different languages other than Bangla. MoI policies recognize only the Bangla language, ignoring the fact that Bangladesh is a multilingual country. The ethnic groups and the indigenous languages got no recognition, even though the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, and place of birth under Article 28 (Rahman, 2010, p. 346). Habermas (1987, as cited in Hamid et al., 2013) defined language policies as "suppression of generalizable interests" as they marginalize the values and ideologies of subordinate groups. Until now, the National Education Policy (NEP) was issued in light of a multilingual perspective in 2010 and pledges to provide mother-tongue instruction for

indigenous minorities (Ministry of Education, 2010). For the first time in the history of the nation, Bangladesh is recognized as a multilingual country with 45 ethnic minority groups that speak nearly 30 indigenous languages (Afrin, 2020). However, there is no reality of effective implementation of multilingual language-in-education policy due to many challenges such as standardization and selection of minority languages, centralized structure of education, poverty, natural disasters, and so on (Rahman, 2010).

Mokibelo (2016, cited in Sibomana, 2020) discovered that students experience anxiety, shock, fear, confusion, and a lack of self-confidence if they are instructed in unfamiliar foreign languages. Currently, Bangla being used as the only MoI in general education results in marginalizing ethnic minority students whose native tongue is not Bangla in many aspects. In many social contexts, ethnic minority students are disregarded due to their incompetence in linguistic capital, i.e., English. Afrin (2020) noted that they seem to be isolated from common gatherings as most of them face difficulties in interacting in Bangla, let alone English (Afrin, 2020). Consequently, they do not have access to a community of practice (COP) and are being deprived of learning. Thus, it can be said that unintelligence, demotivation, and insincerity are not always the reasons for failures in learning. Weaknesses in linguistic capital may cause students to be excluded from the community of practice (COP) and hamper their learning (Sultana, 2014). Secondly, minority students' financial conditions are not likely to improve as they face double challenges in job sectors. (Afrin, 2020). They are expected to be proficient in their second and third languages, i.e., Bangla and English, to get a good job. Rahman (2010) noted, "The people who use dialects while speaking consciously or unconsciously are deprived of getting good jobs." Therefore, the lack of bilingual proficiency limits the job opportunities for ethnic minority students. This language-based economic structure puts minority students at a disadvantage.

More importantly, BMI serves as a way of demeaning the historic ethnic culture as it imposes the national culture, i.e., the Bengali culture, upon the non-Bengali population. The national textbooks only glorify Bengali history and culture and discard the histories and cultures of ethnic minorities. Even the contribution of hill people in the liberation war is not acknowledged in the national textbooks. This inequity keeps ethnic students at the bottom of the educational mainstream, preventing them from achieving academic success, growing economically, and preserving their culture.

Results

The Evolution of MoI Policy: From Colonial Legacy to National Identity

According to the first research question, MoI policy has evolved significantly over time from primary to higher secondary levels in Bangladesh. Initially influenced by colonial rule, English served as the official language in administration, law, and education. At that time, English-medium education was also introduced to the privileged natives. However, after independence in 1971, Bangla became the national language, replacing the use of English in all formal domains, particularly in education. Significantly, education commissions in 1987, 1997, and 2000 reiterated the emphasis on Bangla as the sole MoI at the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of schooling. This shift was driven by national sentiment and the recognition of Bengali nationalism, as outlined in the constitution. The ideology of MoI policy in Bangladesh gradually evolved from a colonial legacy to a national identity.

The Dichotomy of MoI Policy: Complex Realities in Bangladeshi Education

In the inquiry on the consistency of MoI policies and practices, research question 2 indicated

that MoI policies and practices in Bangladesh from primary to higher secondary levels are inconsistent and complex. Despite Bangla being designed as the MoI by the constitution from primary to higher secondary levels of schooling, the widespread use and acceptance of English is evident at all of these levels of education. This situation resulted from several factors, such as colonial mentality, investment in private education, a shift in language ideologies from nationalism to global utility, and government patronage. Implicit English policy is another major factor that is strengthening the inconsistency of MoI policies. Since no explicit macro-policy is formed in the constitution regarding the status of English, the stakeholders in the micro-context are implementing English policies to their advantage. Consequently, all of these factors dissected the present education structure into Bangla-medium, English-version, English-medium, and madrasah education at the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels. In these different streams, different MoIs are being followed; to illustrate, English is the MoI in English-medium and English-version schools, whereas Bangla is the MoI in Bangla medium schools, and finally, both Arabic and Bangla are followed as the MoIs in Madrasa education. This complex situation leads to a discrepancy between MoI policies and practices in the Bangladeshi education system, in which Bangla serves as a de jure language while English is a de facto language.

Inconsistent MoI Policy and Socially, Economically, and Culturally Divided Society

As revealed by research question 3, inconsistent MoI policies and practices from primary to higher secondary levels have wide-ranging impacts on social, economic, and cultural conditions, reinforcing divisions and inequalities.

First of all, EMI is found to generate social barriers between Bangla and English-medium students due to several societal conditions. To begin with, EMI produces a dual social identity where English-medium students are perceived as belonging to a higher social status compared to Bangla-medium students, leading to social stratification. In addition, English is regarded as a linguistic capital in current society, as English competency is associated with social prestige and better opportunities. Besides, people suffer from the assumption nexus nowadays, in which people regulate their behavior in the belief of the superiority of the English-speaking population. Even English proficiency is now being used as the gateway to accessing the learning community, or community of practice (COP). All of these factors result in language-based social divisions and put Bangla-medium students in a disadvantaged position, affecting their access to social benefits and perpetuating feelings of inferiority. Secondly, EMI is found to be responsible for economic divisions as well. For economic advancements, English proficiency is increasingly considered essential, leading to a stratified job market where English-medium students get a significant advantage. However, the high cost of English-medium education limits access to this advantage for the economically disadvantaged. Additionally, the poor quality of English teaching in Bangla-medium schools further increases this divide, hindering opportunities for Bangla-medium students in the English-oriented job market. Finally, inconsistent MoI practices promote cultural imperialism, as English-medium education prioritizes foreign cultures over indigenous ones. This results in a cultural knowledge gap among students, with English-medium students being more familiar with foreign cultures than their own.

When society is already divided by the implicit practices of EMI, BMI further strengthens the divisions and inequalities in social, economic, and cultural contexts, holding the dominant position over minority languages. The pre-2010 educational reports in Bangladesh predominantly focused on the Bangla-speaking majority, neglecting the ethnic minority of the 2% population speaking other languages, despite constitutional provisions against

discrimination. However, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010 recognized the linguistic diversity of Bangladesh, emphasizing first language-based instruction, particularly in the early years of education, but faced implementation challenges. Consequently, Bangla remains the primary MoI, disadvantaging indigenous students who struggle with both Bangla and English proficiency. This linguistic barrier affects their access to social benefits and job opportunities. Moreover, the emphasis on Bengali culture in education sidelines the history and culture of ethnic minorities, generating inequality in education and hindering cultural preservation.

Discussion

The study aims to investigate the consistency between MoI policy and practices from primary to higher secondary levels in education and their social, economic, and cultural impacts. According to the first research question, Bangla is found to be the *de jure* national language and the sole MoI from primary to higher secondary levels of schooling. Following the independence of Bangladesh, Bangla replaced the use of English, the previous official language, and was given utmost priority in all formal domains, particularly education. This particular finding indicates that the nationalistic fervor followed by the liberation war of 1971 led the stakeholders to choose Bangla as the MoI from the foundational to the higher stages of education. Similarly, the government of Malaysia has outlined a Malay MOI in its macro policy document (Miligan, 2020). Liaqat et al. (2019) noted that some other South Asian countries selected their MOI based on nationalism, such as India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Based on the second research question, MoI policy and practices are inconsistent from primary to higher secondary levels, with Bangla serving as a *de jure* and English as a *de facto* MoI. Likewise, almost all private universities in Malaysia (as well as some public universities) have an implicitly dominant presence of English as the MoI. (Miligan, 2020) Similarly, in private schools in Thailand, English has become the *de facto* language, and there has been a noticeable recent trend toward EMI adoption in public schools (Tang 2020). Sah & Li (2018) discovered that EMI is widely and uncritically adopted throughout the global south, mostly at the elementary and secondary levels (as cited in Milligan 2020).

As indicated by the third research question, a substantial gap exists between MoI policy and practices, which has caused two layered social, economic, and cultural divisions. In the first layer, EMI eminently generates social divisions, as competency in English determines higher social status and access to learning communities, leading to lower self-esteem and unequal access to learning opportunities for Bangla-medium students. Economic stratification occurs as access to English-medium education is limited to the affluent, hindering job prospects for Bangla-medium students. Additionally, EMI promotes cultural imperialism, neglecting Bangladeshi culture and reinforcing Western values. A similar case is found in different schools in the Mt. Everest region and the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal by the Sah and Karkib (2023) study, where EMI is preferred so that students gain social and material (economic) capital. However, in this case, EMI limits the learning opportunities for minoritized students, creating a 'comprehension crisis' and 'epistemic inequalities'. The inequalities marked by EMI are also evident in other educational studies in Africa and China in which students perform poorly due to foreign language instructions (Mokibelo, 2016; Babaci-Wilhite, 2013; Williams, 2011; Ssentanda, 2014; Kirkgöz, 2014, cited in Sibomana, 2020; Lei & Hu, 2014).

In the second layer of division, this current study discovered that it is BMI that creates social, economic, and cultural barriers for ethnic students, being the sole MoI from primary to higher secondary levels of education. Although the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010

recognized the linguistic and cultural diversity of the 2% population speaking other languages, pledging mother-tongue instruction in primary education, there is no effective progress at the implementation level. This oversight generates the marginalization of ethnic students in mainstream education, limiting their access to learning opportunities, economic advancement, and the preservation of their historic culture. This particular finding aligns with Chongbang's (2022) ethnographic study based on the Limbu community, a Nepal-based migrant. Data reveals that the cultural rituals of the Limbu community are degraded, and they cannot promote or protect their culture due to a lack of native-language-based policies. Another study by Civan and Coşkun (2016) reveals that a lack of non-native language-based policies negatively affects academic success, which is consistent with this study. Notably, several educational researchers identify that socioeconomic groups, rural, isolated locations, including individuals from non-dominant groups, and conflict-affected areas are negatively affected by EMI (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Rao, 2017; Yi & Adamson, 2019, cited in Milligan, 2020), and in a broader sense, instruction in any non-native language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that Bangla serves as the MoI by de jure from primary to higher secondary levels; however, the use of English turned out to be the de facto language at these levels of education due to colonial history, shifted language ideologies, the privatization of education, and implicit English policies, which results in a disparate education structure, with different MOIs being followed by different streams of education. Consequently, the inconsistency between MoI policy and practices has been found to be a great source of social, economic, and cultural division in the Bangladeshi education system. On the one hand, EMI, as a prestigious variety, linguistic capital, and economic tool, disadvantages Bangla-medium students. On the other hand, BMI acts the same as EMI for ethnic minority students. Consequently, a divide-and-rule society is emerging, characterized by two-fold inequality and marginalization. This study contributed to filling the gap in the local research context, specifically by involving the primary to higher secondary level context. Most importantly, this study offers policymakers insights into the causes of the discrepancies between MoI policies and practices and their negative effects on society, the economy, and culture. Finally, this study lends support to sociolinguistics by taking into account the context of ethnic minority students and indigenous languages.

In line with the findings, the current study recommends some ways to address the issues of MoI in Bangladesh.

- It is high time policymakers reconsidered Bangladesh's MoI policies from primary to higher secondary levels. First of all, the National Education Policy (Final) 2010 needs to be implemented, where English is to be dispelled from the primary level of schooling and a compulsory subject from the secondary to higher secondary level. (Ministry of Education, 2010).
- At the same time, global competence in English is also inevitable. To this end, explicit policies regarding the status of the English language should be implemented to improve the quality of English teaching and diminish its divided usage in society.
- Finally, an inclusive and non-discrimination education system needs to be introduced where MoI is the first language to meet the needs of different language speakers. UNESCO (1953, p. 6, cited in Sibomana, 2020) stressed that 'the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil'. Notably, many developed countries, namely

China, Japan, and Russia, have achieved high literacy in their mother tongues, at least at the primary level (Rahman et. al., 2019). Heugh (2000) argued that mother tongue education is more effective than bilingual or second language mediums of instruction (cited in Uys et al., 2007).

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Biodata

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Exploring the Potential of Using AI Language Models in Democratising Global Language Test Preparation


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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the potential of AI language models for democratising global language test preparation, focusing on the accuracy and consistency of assessment in the context of writing essays for IELTS. This quantitative study compares the assessment scores generated by a Human Examiner (HE) and four AI Language Models: ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9.com, and Upscore.ai. Evaluation uses Mean Absolute Errors (MEA) and Bland Altman analysis. The findings reveal varying levels of accuracy, with Upscore.ai showcasing the lowest MEA of 0.5, followed by Google Bard at 0.85, ChatGPT at 0.9, and Writing9.com at 1.9. Bland Altman Plots visually represent the agreements between each alternative evaluation system and the Human Examiner, shedding light on their alignment. These results hold significant implications for assisting IELTS test takers in their preparation and advancing the democratisation of IELTS and global language assessment by harnessing AI technology to provide more accessible evaluation methods. AI evaluation systems can support teaching and learning by providing automated feedback when human assistance is unavailable, helping students practice independently. However, the findings show that AI's accuracy is not absolute and varies between models, meaning human involvement remains crucial for comprehensive evaluation.

Keywords:

Democratising language assessment, AI technology in language assessment, IELTS essay evaluation

Introduction

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has experienced an exponential rise in popularity over the years, becoming the most widely recognised English language proficiency test globally. The number of tests taken in 2023 reached 4 million, and more than 12,500 institutions and organisations accepted the test (IELTS, 2024). In China alone, over 660,000 people sat for the IELTS test in 2019 (Guan, 2022). As a measure of English language proficiency, IELTS scores hold significant weight in various domains, including admission to universities, immigration requirements, and study abroad opportunities.

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With its role as the gatekeeper for global mobility (Hamid, 2016), the demand for IELTS preparation has surged. However, IELTS preparation and testing can be financially burdensome for test takers. In addition to the relatively high test fee, traditional preparation methods, such as classes and tutoring, often come at a high cost, limiting access for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds or those residing in remote areas. This financial barrier can hinder test takers from reaching their full potential and accessing educational and professional opportunities that require IELTS scores (Alsagoafi, 2021)

The emergence of AI language models presents a transformative opportunity within language learning, particularly in the context of IELTS preparation. These advanced AI models, such as Chat GPT and Google Bard, possess the potential to revolutionise essay assessment and feedback for IELTS test takers (Barrot, 2023; Gozalo-Brizuela & Garrido-Merchan, 2023). Leveraging their natural language processing capabilities, these models can scrutinise essays, providing comprehensive evaluations of language proficiency and offering invaluable suggestions for improvement (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023). By harnessing the power of AI, learners can receive instant, personalised feedback on their writing, enabling them to identify and address weaknesses, enhance their language skills, and improve their IELTS scores. However, exercising critical judgment in using emerging AI technology is crucial. While AI language models offer significant benefits, it is essential to consider potential limitations, biases, and ethical implications associated with their implementation (Ho, 2024; Watters & Lemanski, 2023). This integration of AI language models in IELTS preparation can render the process more efficient, accessible, and cost-effective, empowering many test takers to obtain valuable support and guidance on their journey towards achieving their desired scores. In light of these potential benefits, further research in this area is imperative to explore the full range of possibilities, refine the implementation of AI language models, and ensure their responsible and ethical use (Lo, 2023; Fraiwan & Khasawneh, 2023).

As more AI-powered writing evaluation tools emerge, such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9, and Upscore.ai, it becomes necessary to evaluate their effectiveness. These tools offer varied approaches to scoring and feedback, yet their accuracy compared to human examiners is still under question. To gauge their effectiveness in teaching and learning, further studies are needed to explore the consistency and reliability of these tools. While emerging studies are investigating the use of ChatGPT and Google Bard in writing evaluation (Barrot, 2023; Rahman & Watanobe, 2023), few studies have systematically compared them with other AI-powered tools like Writing9 and Upscore.ai. This gap highlights the need for comparative studies that assess the performance of multiple AI models in the context of IELTS writing evaluation to understand their potential in aiding test-takers and educators.

This research explores the accuracy of four AI technologies in measuring IELTS Writing Task 2 scores. By comparing the scores generated by these automated systems to those assigned by human examiners, we seek to evaluate the reliability and potential of automated scoring systems in accurately assessing IELTS Writing Task 2 responses. Understanding the capabilities and limitations of automated scoring systems is crucial for the future of language proficiency testing. This research can contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of using these technologies, shedding light on their potential to provide accessible and affordable support to more test takers in their IELTS preparation. Ultimately, such findings may have implications for the accessibility of language proficiency testing to create equal opportunities for individuals across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Literature Review

Critical Perspective on IELTS and the Need for Democratisation

IELTS scores are widely used to prove English language proficiency for university admission in anglophone countries (Lam et al., 2021). Although IELTS has been praised for addressing language differences and gaining international recognition for its quality standards and excellence in language testing, its substantial growth has also led to significant social, economic, and political impacts (Pearson, 2019). Green (2019) responds to Pearson's concerns, arguing that obtaining an IELTS score is relatively minor compared to the expenses of pursuing an international education. However, Green's assertion that IELTS test-takers mainly come from a particular economic class overlooks many students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds pursuing international higher education on scholarships.

The fairness, justice, and validity of the IELTS test have been debated by Hamid et al. (2019), who argue that test-takers from various contexts may face disadvantages due to the test's tendency to adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach to measuring English language proficiency. They also explore students' perspectives, suggesting that the policies supporting the use of IELTS are influenced by "economic and regulatory political imperatives." Hamid and Hoang (2018) advocate for a more humanising approach to IELTS, recommending improvements in various aspects of its delivery, such as considering the backgrounds and needs of test-takers.

In response to the concerns raised, Pearson (2019) advocates for the democratisation of the test, aiming to provide freely accessible practice and learning materials to ensure that candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are not disadvantaged. Increasing IELTS' presence on social media can facilitate better communication with candidates, addressing their questions and offering support. Additionally, incorporating non-native speaker voices in the Listening test would better reflect the international nature of English and enhance test validity, ultimately providing equal opportunities for all test-takers. Inoue et al. (2021) also propose changes to the Speaking test in IELTS to improve test validity and openness in the contemporary global world.

AI Language Models and their Potential in Democratising Language Learning and Assessment *ChatGPT and Google Bard*

ChatGPT is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) language model developed by OpenAI, a US-based Microsoft-backed company founded in 2015. ChatGPT has gained widespread popularity, with over 100 million users within two months of its launch (Graphic News, 2023) and an impressive 1.8 billion monthly visitors by early 2023 (Carr, 2024). According to Reuters (Hu, 2023), it is the fastest-growing application in history, achieving the milestone of 100 million monthly active users within just two months of its launch in January 2023.

As an AI language model, ChatGPT's potential to help people across diverse fields is vast and multifaceted. ChatGPT can assist in various domains, including education, research, creativity, and problem-solving.

While ChatGPT offers immense potential, it is important to recognise its limitations. For instance, when the current study is conducted, ChatGPT only provides information up to September 2021, which restricts its utility for recent developments (Gozalo-Brizuela & Garrido-Merchan, 2023). Furthermore, as an AI language model, it lacks personal experiences, emotions, or consciousness, meaning it operates purely on patterns in the data it was trained on (Chomsky et al., 2023; Watters & Lemanski, 2023). The reliance on pre-existing data raises concerns about the propagation of biases and inaccuracies, particularly in sensitive domains such as healthcare and education (Lo, 2023).

Table 1

ChatGPT's potential in various domains

Segment or Domain	What ChatGPT claims it can do
Knowledge and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quick access to a wide range of information, helping users bridge knowledge gaps in topics like history, science, and current events (Fraivan & Khasawneh, 2023).
Learning and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support learners of all ages by simplifying complex topics, assisting with homework, and fostering interactive learning (Lo, 2023; Rahman & Watanobe, 2023).
Creative Endeavours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate ideas, assist with brainstorming, and offer suggestions to enhance creative projects such as writing or music (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023).
Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse complex issues, provide insights, and suggest solutions by considering multiple perspectives (Watters & Lemanski, 2023).
Language and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help improve communication skills, refine writing styles, and offer translation assistance (Fraivan & Khasawneh, 2023).
Accessibility and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to inclusivity by making information more accessible for individuals with disabilities or language barriers (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023).

In the realm of AI-powered language models, Google Bard has emerged as a key competitor to ChatGPT, having been introduced by Google shortly after the launch of ChatGPT. Like its competitor, Bard leverages machine-learning algorithms to generate human-like responses to user queries (da Silva & Ulbrigde, 2024). Bard is built on Google's LaMDA model and later improved with PaLM 2, enabling it to process and generate text with remarkable fluency and accuracy (Giannakopoulos et al., 2023).

Despite being relatively new, Google Bard has gained widespread popularity, particularly in fields such as customer service, virtual assistants, and social media chatbots, where its ability to understand and mimic human conversation is highly valued (Waisberg et al., 2024). One of Bard's significant advantages over ChatGPT is its access to real-time web information, allowing it to provide more current and fact-based responses, a capability that ChatGPT lacks due to its data cutoff in 2021 (Fusion Chat, 2023).

However, Bard still faces challenges, particularly in tasks that require creativity and conversational fluency, where ChatGPT often outperforms it. Bard's responses can sometimes lack the fluidity and coherence found in ChatGPT's outputs, making it more suited for fact-based tasks like information retrieval and summarisation rather than creative writing or in-depth dialogues (Instructive Tech, 2023). Studies have also shown that Bard is still developing in code generation and debugging. However, recent improvements have enabled it to support various programming languages, positioning it as a promising tool for developers (Ahmed et al., 2023).

ChatGPT and Google Bard have tremendous potential for democratising access to IELTS preparation by offering automated writing feedback and scoring. As AI-driven models, they can provide immediate feedback on grammar, coherence, and structure, which is essential for test-takers aiming to improve their writing skills. Luu & Luu (2022) emphasise the importance of self-study strategies for IELTS test preparation, particularly focusing on practising sample tests and developing essential language skills like vocabulary and grammar. These strategies help test-takers improve independently, enabling them to address weaknesses effectively. The potential of AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT and Google Bard could significantly enhance

this self-directed learning by providing instant feedback, thus empowering IELTS candidates with more accessible, personalised, and cost-effective resources for improving their writing and overall test performance. Barrot (2023) highlights the utility of ChatGPT in assisting second-language learners with real-time feedback and enhancing writing accuracy and fluency. However, the limitations in nuanced scoring (e.g., argument development and creativity) suggest that human oversight remains necessary for comprehensive writing evaluations. Similarly, Bard's real-time capabilities offer updated feedback, although it requires further refinement in scoring higher-order writing skills.

Writing9.com and Upscore.ai

Writing9 and Upscore.ai are AI-powered platforms specifically designed to evaluate IELTS essays. Writing9 offers automated essay checking, real-time feedback, and customised essay structure, content, grammar, and vocabulary evaluation. It provides more advanced feedback at a monthly starting price of \$19.99. Upscore.ai, on the other hand, offers quick feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and content coherence, with pricing starting at \$9.99 per month.

Automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems like Writing9 and Upscore.ai offer immediate feedback, a crucial feature for learners aiming to improve writing proficiency through rapid iteration (Shi & Aryadoust, 2022). Wei et al. (2023) highlight the effectiveness of such systems for lower-proficiency learners, noting that immediate corrective feedback can significantly improve grammatical accuracy and task cohesion. However, Cotos (2014) observes that while these systems efficiently provide surface-level corrections, they may struggle to address more nuanced aspects of writing.

Studies indicate that AWE systems like Writing9 and Upscore.ai are particularly beneficial for lower-proficiency learners (Wei et al., 2023). These platforms provide scalable, frequent feedback, allowing learners to improve their writing skills continuously. These tools are invaluable for IELTS preparation, where grammatical accuracy and coherence are critical. However, Liao et al. (2021) suggest that students must also engage with feedback on more complex aspects, such as rhetorical structure, to achieve holistic improvement.

While both platforms excel in correcting grammar and structure, they face limitations in evaluating subjective writing elements such as argument development and creativity (Shi & Aryadoust, 2022; Richardson & Clesham, 2021). This limitation reflects the broader challenge for AWE systems, which tend to prioritise rule-based corrections over more interpretive elements of writing (Cotos, 2014). Writing9 and Upscore.ai may provide robust feedback on basic errors but are less effective in offering insights on higher-order writing skills.

Research consistently emphasises the importance of combining AWE tools with human feedback. Wei et al. (2023) and Shi and Aryadoust (2022) recommend that systems like Writing9 and Upscore.ai should complement traditional instruction, particularly when addressing complex elements like argumentation and critical thinking. Human feedback is essential for addressing nuances that AI systems may overlook (Richardson & Clesham, 2021).

Writing9 and Upscore.ai offer efficient, cost-effective solutions for IELTS preparation and provide valuable feedback on basic writing mechanics. However, to maximise their impact, these tools should be integrated with human feedback, ensuring the comprehensive development of both surface-level and complex writing skills.

Studies Investigating the Use of AI in Global Language Testing

It has been argued that artificial intelligence can play a role in assessing the scope of learners' current knowledge and pinpointing areas that require additional improvement. This facilitates

the selection of suitable materials for future lessons and can even address existing errors (Huang et al., 2021). There has been a growing body of research on using currently popular artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT and Google Bard in English language teaching. McMurtrie (2022) and Sharples (2022) highlight the growing importance of AI-powered tools like ChatGPT in writing and education. McMurtrie (2022) suggests these tools will become as ubiquitous as calculators and computers. Sharples recommends encouraging their use to enhance the learning experience. In contrast, Liao et al. (2023) indicate that while incorporating generative artificial intelligence, like ChatGPT, can significantly aid English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in enhancing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, certain limitations persist, such as ChatGPT's tendency to generate "mechanised language expressions". They argue that users should refrain from excessive dependence on AI and exercise caution regarding academic misconduct.

Richardson and Clesham (2021) investigate candidates' experiences and perceptions of Pearson Test of English (PTE) through a mixed methods approach. It explores the role of candidates in AI-led language testing, revealing insights into their test preparation, access issues, and concerns related to socio-economic disadvantages. The study highlights a lack of understanding among candidates about the precise role played by AI in PTE. Recommendations include challenging the commercial preparation industry's effectiveness, investigating socio-economic impacts on test preparation, and further exploring candidates' understanding of AI in assessment. Additionally, the study suggests public discussions about the limits and opportunities of using AI in educational assessment.

Additionally, Koraiishi (2023) explores the use of ChatGPT in language assessment, particularly in placement tests and international proficiency exams. According to him, ChatGPT provides a way to tackle the challenges posed by these tests by enabling the evaluation of students' performance by the standards of such tests. He argues that the potential impact of ChatGPT's output results extends significantly in improving classroom experiences and providing valuable support to teachers in their demanding responsibilities. Thus, Koraiishi (2023) advocates for the inclusion of skills related to AI, such as designing prompts and comprehending the potential of AI, in formal teacher training programs. He also notes the ChatGPT's ability to provide scores and feedback for sample IELTS essays, although there is no mention of the accuracy or reliability of this particular ability.

Nevertheless, despite the growing popularity of research on the use of artificial intelligence in global language assessments, more research is needed to explore their potential and drawbacks. While many AI-powered websites can assess language production, few studies have investigated the validity and reliability of these assessments, especially compared to a trained and certified human reviewer. Therefore, this study aims to measure the accuracy and consistency of scores generated by artificial intelligence in the context of IELTS Writing essays to explore their potential in democratising IELTS preparation.

Methods

The present study used a quantitative approach to measure the accuracy and consistency of the four AI-generated scoring systems.

Data preparation

The data used in this study were model essays from official past exam papers published by Cambridge University Press between 2006 and 2023, comprising 18 series. Each edition

contains four model essays scored by Cambridge IELTS examiners, except for the first edition, which only provides two sample essays. The current study used model essays from Cambridge IELTS series 2 to 18 (excluding series 4 and 6), 60 essays in total with reviews and scores provided by Cambridge IELTS examiners. The essays used in this study represent a range of IELTS Writing Task 2 responses across various band scores, ensuring that the AI tools are tested on diverse writing samples. The essays were carefully selected to cover a wide array of topics, writing structures, and proficiency levels, ensuring that the tools are evaluated based on their ability to assess both high-scoring and lower-scoring essays. All essays were re-typed into an editable format (using a word processing application), paying attention to typos and punctuation as used in the model essays. Scores provided by Cambridge examiners were inputted into an Excel sheet. For quantitative analysis, all essays reviewed by Cambridge examiners as “very good” answers were assigned a score of 8, per the IELTS score predicates (8 means very good user, while 9 means expert user).

ChatGPT and Google Bard were selected for this study because they are among the most powerful and widely recognised AI language models currently available. These tools are versatile and capable of performing a wide range of tasks, including writing evaluation, which makes them ideal candidates for assessing the potential of AI in the context of IELTS essay scoring. Writing9 was chosen for its popularity as an AI-powered tool designed for evaluating IELTS essays. Many IELTS test-takers and educators rely on Writing9 for automated essay scoring, making it an essential tool to analyse within the context of this study. Upscore.ai is relatively new but was included because its accuracy and reliability in scoring have not been extensively studied. As a growing AI-powered essay reviewer, it holds potential but requires further investigation to assess its effectiveness compared to established models like ChatGPT and Writing9. By including these tools, the study aims to cover both general-purpose AI models and tools specifically designed for IELTS essay evaluation, comprehensively comparing their capabilities.

The version of chatbots used in this study was GPT 3.5 and the Google Bard version of July 2023. The same prompt was used to get predictive scores from ChatGPT and Google Bard: “Give a score to the following IELTS Writing Task 2 response”, followed by copy-pasting the specific prompt and model essay. Since Writing9 and Upscore.ai were explicitly designed to evaluate IELTS Writing responses, the method to gain a prediction score was the same: inputting or pasting each essay prompt and model answer to the specified text boxes. The scores obtained were transcribed into the same Excel sheet.

Data analysis

The scores obtained from all five scoring systems were analysed statistically to determine the extent of difference and agreement between each alternative scoring system and the standard system (HE). Two analysis measures were used: Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Bland-Altman Analysis.

The Mean Absolute Error (MAE) provides insight into the accuracy of each scoring system by measuring the average magnitude of errors between the AI systems' scores and the human examiner's (HE) scores. The smaller the MAE, the closer the AI-generated scores are to the HE's scores, reflecting the AI system's overall accuracy. For instance, a lower MAE indicates greater reliability and agreement with human scores, making it a more accurate tool for scoring essays.

The Bland-Altman Analysis, on the other hand, assesses the level of agreement between two methods by plotting the differences between scores (AI vs. HE) against their average. This

visual method identifies any systematic bias or deviation by examining how much the AI scores deviate from the HE's scores across the score range. The limits of agreement (LoA) in these plots help pinpoint any significant outliers or trends, indicating how consistently the AI systems align with human judgment. If the majority of the points lie within the acceptable LoA, the AI system is considered to be in good agreement with the human examiner. Conversely, points outside these limits or patterns of systematic bias suggest poorer performance or variability.

In combining these two measures, MAE provides a clear numerical understanding of the differences between AI and HE scores. At the same time, Bland-Altman Analysis offers a visual and interpretive assessment of the agreement, allowing us to detect trends, biases, or inconsistencies in AI scoring behaviour. Together, they offer a comprehensive view of each system's performance compared to human examiners, highlighting where AI models succeed or fall short.

Results

Scores by Human Examiner (HE), ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9.com, and Upscore.ai

It is observed that ChatGPT tends to give slightly higher scores compared to other AI scoring systems, particularly for essays that have received high scores from human examiners. On the other hand, Google Bard's scoring system generally aligns with the human examiner's scores, like ChatGPT, and it assigns scores within one point of the human examiner's scores. However, Google Bard tends to give lower scores than ChatGPT for essays that received higher scores from human examiners. Meanwhile, Upscore.ai is more likely to give scores closer to the human examiner's scores than other AI scoring systems, and the scores assigned by Upscore.ai are often within half a point of the human examiner's scores. It is worth noting that Upscore.ai also demonstrates the least variability in scores compared to other AI scoring systems.

Mean Absolute Error

Table 2

Mean Absolute Error (MAE)

Absolute Error	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HE vs ChatGPT	60	.00	3.00	.9083	.71599
HE vs Bard	60	.00	3.00	.8500	.71485
HE vs Writing9	60	.00	3.50	1.9000	.87236
HE vs Upscore.ai	60	.00	1.50	.5083	.49993

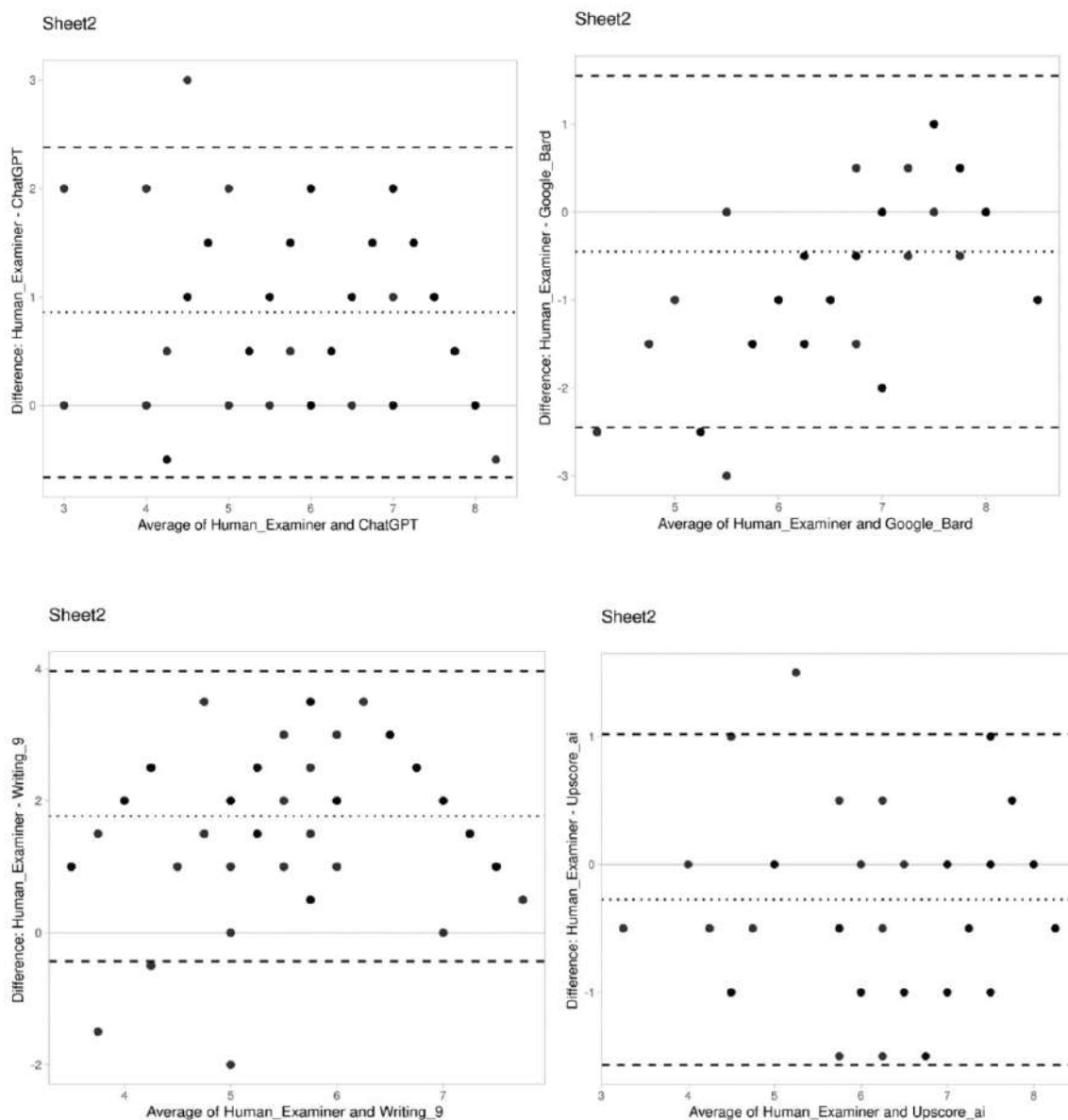
In the case of ChatGPT versus Human Evaluation (HE) with an MAE of 0.9, the value denotes that the scores derived from ChatGPT exhibit an average deviation of approximately 0.9 units from the official scores (HE). This MAE implies a moderate average error in ChatGPT's scoring system compared to the official scoring system. Similarly, for Google Bard versus HE with an MAE of 0.85, the score deviation averages around 0.85 units, indicating a slightly lower MAE than ChatGPT. This suggests that Google Bard demonstrates a marginally improved agreement with the official scores compared to ChatGPT. Turning to Writing9 versus HE with an MAE of 1.9, the higher MAE than the preceding alternatives (ChatGPT and Google Bard) signifies that scores from Writing9, on average, differ by approximately 1.9 units from the official scores, indicating a larger average error. Lastly, Upscore.ai versus HE with an MAE of 0.5 indicates the lowest MAE among all alternative scoring systems, suggesting that Upscore.ai exhibits the

closest agreement with the official scores on average.

Bland Altman Analysis

Figure 1

Bland Altman Plots of AI scoring systems compared to Human Examiner



Based on the MAE values, Upscore.ai appears to be the most accurate alternative scoring system, followed by Google Bard and ChatGPT. Writing9 shows the highest average error, suggesting the least agreement with the human examiner (HE).

The Bland-Altman plot for ChatGPT shows a wide spread of points, with many falling outside the limits of agreement. This indicates significant variability between ChatGPT's scores and the human examiner's scores, particularly for essays scoring above 6. The deviations suggest inconsistency in how ChatGPT assesses higher-scoring essays, making it less reliable in comparison.

Google Bard demonstrates better agreement with human examiners than ChatGPT, with most points clustering near the zero-difference line. However, some variability remains, particularly

in lower-scoring essays (below 5). This suggests that Bard tends to under-score lower-quality essays, reflecting a conservative approach to scoring in that range.

Writing9 exhibits the most variability among the AI systems, with points scattered widely and many falling outside the limits of agreement. This pattern indicates the least agreement with human examiners, particularly in mid-range scores (5-7). Writing9's scoring is highly inconsistent, either overestimating or underestimating essays compared to the human standard.

On the other hand, Upscore.ai shows the closest agreement with the human examiners. Most points in the Bland-Altman plot lie near the zero-difference line, with very few points deviating from the limits of agreement. This demonstrates that Upscore.ai's scores are highly consistent with the human examiner's, confirming its status as the most accurate and reliable alternative scoring system.

Discussion

Scoring Trends among the Four AI Scoring Systems

Several consistent scoring trends emerge in comparing the performance of ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9, and Upscore.ai to human examiners in IELTS essay scoring. All four AI systems exhibit a noteworthy tendency: they consistently align with human examiners when awarding high scores. Studies by Shi & Aryadoust (2022) and Richardson & Clesham (2021) emphasise that AI-powered systems often show reliability in scoring tasks that are structured and straightforward, which is reflected in the fact that all four AI systems aligned well with human examiners for essays that received high scores.

However, notable differences arise when these AI systems handle lower and mid-range scoring essays. ChatGPT and Writing9 exhibit a tendency to assign slightly higher scores than human examiners for essays that initially received lower scores. This cautious scoring approach indicates that both systems may overestimate essays with weaker writing, perhaps due to their reliance on surface-level grammar and vocabulary features rather than a deeper assessment of content quality or argument structure. This pattern aligns with research by Cotos (2014) and Wei et al. (2023), who note that automated systems can struggle with nuanced aspects like argumentation instead of relying heavily on surface-level grammar and vocabulary.

In contrast, Google Bard generally aligns with human examiners but introduces more variability in mid-range essays (typically scores of 5 to 6). While Bard's scores are closer to those of human examiners than ChatGPT's, its tendency to assign slightly lower scores for mid-range essays implies that it may penalise essays more harshly for errors in structure or development, reflecting a more conservative approach to scoring. This variability indicates that Bard, though more aligned with human evaluations, may still struggle with fine-grained distinctions in neither excellent nor poor essays.

On the other hand, Upscore.ai stands out as the most accurate among the four AI systems, with the lowest Mean Absolute Error (MAE) compared to human examiners. Upscore.ai's scores are consistently within half a point of the human examiner's scores, suggesting a stronger agreement and less variability in scoring. This consistency reflects its robustness in handling a variety of essay quality levels, making it the most reliable option for automated scoring. Upscore.ai's ability to maintain close agreement with human scores, particularly in high and mid-range essays, highlights its potential for broader implementation in standardised test scoring.

The differences in the scoring patterns among the four systems underscore the need to assess

each other's strengths and limitations carefully. ChatGPT and Writing9 appear more lenient and potentially less reliable for essays in the lower to mid-range, while Google Bard offers a more conservative and varied scoring approach. Upscore.ai, by contrast, emerges as the most precise and consistent alternative, making it the most promising AI model for providing scores that closely mirror human evaluators.

The Potential of AI Technologies in Democratising IELTS Preparation

Integrating AI technologies into IELTS essay scoring has substantial potential to democratise IELTS preparation. Firstly, these AI systems offer a level of consistency and reliability in scoring that is invaluable for test-takers. AI scoring systems provide uniform evaluations regardless of the human examiner's subjectivity or workload. Secondly, AI systems are highly efficient, providing prompt feedback to test-takers. This efficiency is essential for candidates aiming to enhance their writing skills within a limited timeframe. Moreover, the accessibility of AI technologies is a game-changer in IELTS preparation. These systems are available online, bridging geographical barriers and making preparation resources readily available to a global audience.

AI systems empower test-takers with self-assessment tools. By offering prompt feedback, candidates can independently identify areas for improvement. This self-directed learning approach is instrumental in honing writing skills. Cost-effectiveness is another advantage. AI systems offer multiple evaluations at a fraction of the cost of hiring human examiners, making quality test preparation more affordable. Furthermore, AI systems adhere to predefined evaluation criteria, ensuring fairness and consistency in assessments, which reduces the potential for bias.

Caution and Limitation in Using AI Technology in IELTS Essay Evaluation

While AI technologies offer numerous benefits, there are essential cautions and limitations to consider. One significant caution is the tendency of AI systems to assign slightly higher scores than human examiners. This can lead to test-takers overestimating their abilities, potentially impacting their performance on the actual exam. AI systems may also lack the nuanced evaluation capabilities of human examiners. They may struggle to grasp subtle nuances in essay quality, such as content, argumentation, or cultural context. The contextual understanding and cultural sensitivity possessed by human examiners can be challenging for AI systems to replicate accurately.

Variability in scoring, as observed in some AI systems like Writing9, can introduce inconsistencies in test-takers' feedback, making it less reliable than human assessments. AI systems primarily provide scores but may not offer detailed feedback on specific areas for improvement. Constructive feedback on grammar, vocabulary, or structural issues is crucial for test-takers looking to enhance their writing skills. Lastly, the human factor cannot be entirely replaced by AI. Human examiners bring cultural understanding and context to their assessments, something that AI systems currently struggle to replicate.

In conclusion, AI scoring systems hold the potential to significantly impact IELTS preparation by providing consistent, efficient, and accessible evaluations. However, test-takers should use AI evaluations as a comprehensive preparation strategy component, alongside human feedback and guidance. Technology advances may bridge existing gaps in essay evaluation, but it is essential to recognise AI's limitations in nuanced assessment and contextual understanding. Balancing the advantages and limitations of AI technology in IELTS preparation is key to maximising success in the IELTS exam.

Implications for Language Teaching and Learning

The findings of this study carry important implications for the use of AI in teaching and learning, particularly in empowering students in their own learning and assessment processes. By integrating tools like ChatGPT and Google Bard, educators can democratise access to high-quality feedback, a benefit highlighted by studies such as Barrot (2023) and Lo (2023). For instance, Barrot (2023) points out that automated tools can significantly enhance students' engagement in writing tasks by providing instant, detailed feedback. This is especially useful for learners who might otherwise lack access to personalised instruction.

Moreover, AI-powered writing evaluation platforms offer cost-effective and scalable solutions, allowing students to practice and refine their skills without incurring the high costs of traditional tutoring or exam preparation courses (Fraivan & Khasawneh, 2023). This democratisation of education, particularly in high-stakes exams like IELTS, is crucial for equal opportunities for learners from various socio-economic backgrounds (Pearson, 2019).

However, the study also underscores the need for human oversight in teaching and assessment. While AI systems can efficiently address grammar and structure, their limitations in evaluating creativity, argument development, and cultural context necessitate a blended approach where human feedback complements automated evaluation. This ensures that students receive comprehensive guidance on their strengths and areas for improvement beyond the mechanical aspects of writing.

Conclusion

This study highlights the potential of AI language models like ChatGPT, Google Bard, Writing9, and Upscore.ai in democratising global language test preparation, particularly in IELTS essay scoring. While Upscore.ai emerges as the most accurate, the findings reveal varying levels of accuracy among AI models, with human oversight remaining critical for nuanced and comprehensive evaluations. These AI tools can enhance accessibility, allowing test-takers from diverse backgrounds to access affordable and consistent feedback. However, further research is essential to address the gaps identified in this study.

Future research should focus on several critical areas to fully harness AI's potential in educational contexts. First, there is a need to examine how AI systems can be further refined to evaluate complex elements of writing, such as argument development, creativity, and cultural context, areas where human examiners currently excel. Additionally, exploring the development of hybrid assessment systems, where AI tools complement human evaluation, can provide a balanced approach, ensuring both efficiency and depth in feedback. Moreover, studies could investigate the long-term pedagogical impacts of AI-driven feedback. Research could explore how educators can use AI-generated feedback to support differentiated instruction, especially in large classrooms where individual feedback is challenging. Studies should also look into teacher training programs that incorporate AI literacy, helping teachers design prompts and understand AI limitations to maximise its use in the classroom.

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Biodata

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Appendix 1

Table 2 - Scores by Human Examiner and the Four AI Language Models

Essay No	Series Number	Test Number	Score				
			Human Examiner (HE)	ChatGP T	Google Bard	Writing 9	Upscore .ai
1	18	1	8	8	7	5	7.5
2	18	2	8	8	7	5.5	8
3	18	3	8	8	7	6.5	8
4	18	4	8	8.5	7	6	8
5	17	1	6.5	6	7	3	7.5
6	17	2	6.5	5	7	5.5	7.5
7	17	3	6.5	6	7	4.5	7.5
8	17	4	6	6	6.5	4.5	7
9	16	1	6	6	7	5.5	7.5
10	16	2	4.5	4	5.5	3	5
11	16	3	7	5	6.5	7	7.5
12	16	4	4	2	5.5	3	4
13	15	1	7	5	7	4.5	7
14	15	2	6	6	8	4.5	7.5
15	15	3	7	7	7	5	8
16	15	4	6.5	5	7	4	6

17	14	1	7	6	7	5	7.5
18	14	2	8	7	9	6	7
19	14	3	5.5	5	6.5	3	6
20	14	4	7.5	6	7.5	4.5	7.5
21	13	1	6.5	6	7	5	6.5
22	13	2	7	7	7	5	8
23	13	3	6	5	6.5	4	5.5
24	13	4	6	3	6.5	4	4.5
25	12	1	6	4	7	5.5	6
26	12	2	5	3	6.5	5	5
27	12	3	7.5	6.5	7	4	7.5
28	12	4	5	4	6.5	3	4
29	11	1	5.5	4	6.5	4	6.5
30	11	2	5	5	6.5	4	6.5
31	11	3	7	6	7.5	4	7
32	11	4	5.5	5	7	4.5	7
33	10	1	8	6.5	8	4.5	8
34	10	2	3	3	5.5	4.5	3.5
35	10	3	8	7.5	7.5	6	8.5
36	10	4	5.5	5.5	5.5	3	6.5
37	9	1	8	8	8	6	8
38	9	2	8	7	8	5	8
39	9	3	8	7	9	7	8.5
40	9	4	4	4	6.5	3	4.5
41	8	1	8	7	8	6	8
42	8	2	5.5	4	7	3	6
43	8	3	8	7	8	7.5	8
44	8	4	6.5	6.5	7	4	7.5
45	7	1	8	7	7.5	5.5	8
46	7	2	7.5	6	8	4	7.5
47	7	3	8	7	7	5	8
48	7	4	5	4	6.5	3	5
49	5	1	4	4.5	7	4.5	5
50	5	2	8	6.5	7	6	7.5
51	5	3	6	5.5	8	5	6.5
52	5	4	8	6.5	7	7	8
53	3	1	4	4.5	6.5	6	5
54	3	2	8	6.5	7.5	7	8
55	3	3	8	6	8	6	8
56	3	4	6	5	7.5	4	7
57	2	1	8	7	7.5	5.5	8.5
58	2	2	8	6.5	7.5	5	7
59	2	3	8	6	7	6.5	7.5
60	2	4	8	7.5	7.5	5.5	8


Contrastive Analysis of Similes with Dog Image in English and Vietnamese and Implications

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: similes, dog image, contrastive analysis, cross-linguistic, cross-cultural

Studies on dog images in idiomatic languages in different languages always receive a lot of attention from researchers. The present study examines the similarities of 21 English-Vietnamese dog similes and tries to account for the differences based on Hofstede's model (2001). The analysis results show that the image of the dog in each language has unique cultural characteristics due to the influence of factors such as geographical circumstances and customs. While the image of a dog appearing in English similes has both positive meaning (38%) and negative meaning (62%), Vietnamese similes record a full dominance in negative meanings (100%). Besides, the semantic symbols of similes with dog elements in Vietnamese and English have interesting similarities. Understanding the semantic characteristics of words for dogs in English and Vietnamese similes contributes to discovering new things about the life, customs, practices, culture, and thinking of British and Vietnamese people.

Introduction

Language contributes to the formation of culture and transports and preserves culture. Brown (1994) argues that a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are so intricately intertwined that one cannot separate the two without losing the meaning of either language or culture (p.165). Language has a widespread influence on social life because it is a regular and inevitable phenomenon in humans. During the process of contact with the natural world, people accumulate their knowledge and experience about that world through language. Faced with an extremely rich and diverse world, they have created different forms of comparison to evaluate and specifically describe both the natural and social environments. In the process, they found many different linguistic methods to express degrees of comparison, including similes.

Among the similes, the similes about animals account for a very rich amount. Among the animals that are close to humans, it is impossible not to mention dogs. The image of a dog appears quite a lot in English and Vietnamese similes. This is also a very attractive topic for linguists and cultural researchers. In the culture and spirituality of some ethnic groups, dogs are animals closely attached to humans with honored qualities such as loyalty, intelligence, and care for their owners... Dogs are considered as close friends of humans, dogs guard people's homes, and there are even places where dogs are worshiped at temples and shrines. However, the image of dogs in many cultures is also associated with bad, unlucky or disrespectful things in society. Because people are familiar with this animal, they use it often in their language expressions; therefore, similes with the " dog " image play an important role in British and Vietnamese people's lives.

The objective of this study includes analyzing and comparing similes containing dog images in English and Vietnamese to understand their usage and meaning in the two languages. At the same time, the study identifies similarities and differences in how dog images are used in the similes of the two languages, thereby finding out the cultural and linguistic characteristics of each country, and evaluating the importance of dog images in conveying cultural meanings and values through language. Therefore, the study proposes directions for development and application in translating, teaching, and learning English and Vietnamese based on understanding the similarities and differences between the similes of the two languages.

Literature review

Simile

In the English language, according to the Oxford Dictionary, the simile is "a word or phrase that compares something to something else, using the words *like* or *as*. Cambridge Dictionary defines simile as "a form of expression using 'like' or 'as', in which one thing is compared to another which it only resembles in one or a small number of ways." Huu Chanh (2021) concludes that simile is sometimes confused with metaphors in some cultures since they hold the functions of comparisons. In other words, an image or idea means one thing in a particular culture but refers to another thing in different cultures. According to Hussein and Sawalha (2016), a simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things or people to identify similarities or qualities that they share by using the word "like" or "as" to make the comparison. Similes are generally more easily identified because of the use of the words "as" and/or "like," and metaphors are figures of speech used mainly in the analysis of literary texts. Similes can be expressed through some frames, namely [As+Adj+As+Noun], [Adj+like+Noun], and [Adj+as+Noun].

In the Vietnamese language, Hoang Van Hanh (2003) believes that "simile is a stable combination of words, originating from comparison, with symbolic meaning." Regarding morphology-structure, in similes, the component represents the comparison relationship, and the comparison (like B) is a mandatory and stable part of the surface structure and deep structure. Words denoting comparisons (B) often describe typical images. The compared side t in the simile "t like B" is mandatory in the deep structure but unstable in the surface structure - that is, in some cases, t can be hidden. The comparative structure like B has the following three types of meaning structure: t like B (like B denotes the degree of t), t like B (like B denotes the manner of t), and like B (like B denotes the attribute of A). B's double layer of meaning is in such a way that B makes the similes symbolic; there is no opposition between the literal and figurative meaning of B. According to Hoang Kim Ngoc (2009), the simile compares two

things, A and B, that have some common sign in common. A is an unknown thing, thanks to B, the reader knows A or understands more about A. A simile is also called rhetorical comparison or visual comparison, which is a comparison that is not of the same kind, not of the same general category, as long as there is some cognitive or psychological similarity (p.84).

Previous studies

Bachrun (2023) studies metaphors about dogs in proverbial expressions in English and Indonesian and examines the semantic aspect in both languages. The findings show that 20 concepts were found to be the target domain of the vocabulary “dog” in the proverbs analyzed in this study. These include a terrible person; a lucky talent; a bitter person; a hungry soul; a cornered person; a criminal; a best friend; a fool; a threat; a lucky talent; someone who is not appreciated; a strong person, dishonesty; brave nature; modest upbringing; decisive significance; cognitive aspect; gratefulness; a coward. The study concluded that the way English and Indonesians perceive the term "dog" is symbolically different. However, both speech groups preserved "dog" vocabulary and used general ideas as their target areas.

In their study, Farghal and Haider (2023) take a closer look at dog expressions in English in terms of taxonomy, structure, attitude, semantics, and translatability into Arabic. Their study shows that the richness of expressions about dogs in English qualifies the conceptual metaphor "humans are dogs" in a status equivalent to the universal conceptual metaphor "humans are animals". The data in this study included 110 English dog expressions. Based on the analysis of these expressions, the results showed that 91.25% showed negative characteristics and habits of dogs towards humans despite the highly regarded position that dogs currently hold in the world and Anglo-American culture. Common idioms dominate the data (72.72%), followed by similes (13.64%) and sayings (13.64%).

The research by Ranti et al. (2023) aims to compare the differences and similarities in the meaning of proverbs in Japanese and Indonesian using the words dog and cat. This research was designed with a qualitative descriptive research design. The method used to describe research objects in words. The data for this research are 143 proverbs in Indonesian and Japanese that use the words 犬 (dog) and 猫 (cat) with the analytical technique used is contrastive analysis. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that there are differences and similarities between Japanese proverbs and Indonesian proverbs that use the words 犬 (dog) and 猫 (cat).

In Vietnam, several studies talk about the image of dogs in Vietnamese idioms and compare them with English and other languages. Typical examples include the research of Le Thi Minh Thao (2014). This research was conducted to point out some differences between English and Vietnamese idioms containing the word "dog," and the specific features of English and Vietnamese culture about dogs lie behind the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese idioms. Research shows that English and Vietnamese idioms that use the image of a dog have both negative and positive meanings. However, positive meanings are more prominent in English idioms, while Vietnamese idioms record a dominance in negative meanings. Another contrastive study by Hung (2024) analyzes the symbolic meanings of “dog” in Chinese and Vietnamese idioms. The findings reveal that “dog” has two similar symbolic meanings in both Chinese and Vietnamese, with 08 distinctive meanings merely found in the former and 05 merely in the latter, posing difficulties for Vietnamese learners in the acquisition of Chinese idioms containing "dog". This study is expected to help learners rectify language interference errors to better understand and use Chinese idioms.

Thus, it can be seen that there have been quite a few studies on proverbs and idioms that use dog images in English and Vietnamese, but specific research on similes that use dog images in English and Vietnamese, from which cross-cultural cross-linguistic comparison is still a gap that our research hopes to fill.

Research questions

The study focuses on two main research questions:

1. What are the similarities between English and Vietnamese similes about the dog from cross-cultural perspectives?
2. What is the difference between English and Vietnamese similes about the dog from cross-cultural perspectives?

Methods

The main purpose of the research is to determine the similarities and differences between the two languages, English - and Vietnamese, that are compared. In addition, an equally important purpose is to clarify the cultural characteristics related to those two languages. The results of research analysis linking the relationship between language and culture not only help clarify the characteristics of language and culture but also provide significant insights into the type of language and culture. Additionally, it helps avoid shock in intercultural communication and has many other foreign language and intercultural English teaching applications. The research method used is the cross-cultural contrastive method. The present study aims to explore the differences in semantic features and syntactic features reflected by English and Vietnamese dog similes under the guidance of part of Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (2001). Hofstede (2001) set the criterion of correspondence of the main meaning that English and Vietnamese equivalents of dog similes convey. Similes often put across the same message but utilize different images to convey it. These differences in imagery reflect the differences in ways of life and types of society, including different social standards, in the selected three nations. Many similes are common to all or almost all European languages, but there are also language- and culture-specific similes that do not have a corresponding equivalent in other languages.

The following three types of interlingual equivalents will be distinguished based on Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (2001).

Full Equivalence (FE): The category of full equivalence will include similes with the same semantic, structural, and lexical content and figurative and pragmatic meaning. Similes will be considered fully equivalent even when they manifest some minor grammatical discrepancies explained by the different grammar structures of the target language. Small inconsistencies in prepositions, for example, and slight morphological and syntactic differences will be disregarded.

Relative Equivalence (RE): Relative equivalents are those similes that are identical in terms of meaning but manifest some minor differences with respect to form. These expressions may have slight lexical, grammatical, or lexico-grammatical differences, but at the same time, they still satisfy all levels of equivalence. Commonly, there are differences in open word classes, i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Zero-Equivalence (ZE): Zero-equivalence, termed also lacunarity, refers to a situation when no equivalent can be found for a given simile in another language. In other words, the other language lacks a simile or a saying that would convey the same meaning, even in different words.

Subjects and scope of research

In this study, we used English and Vietnamese as survey subjects. These are two languages that are very different in type and language family, belonging to two cultures with different European and Asian characteristics. However, due to the ups and downs of history, these two languages and two cultures have had interactions for centuries. Therefore, the comparative study of multiple meanings is even more meaningful in terms of language and culture and hopefully has implications for theory and application. Our research is limited to a small group of similes whose clauses are compared to the dog of the two languages, English and Vietnamese, with the purpose of clarifying the similarities and differences between them.

We chose 21 corresponding similes in the two languages English and Vietnamese as the corpus for comparative analysis. English similes are the base language, and Vietnamese similes are the language used for comparison. Our exploited corpus is mainly based on dictionaries compiled by reputable authors.

Research data

English data

According to statistics from the BNC linguistics corpus in Bakalova (2008), the similes that use the image of a dog account for 7.6% of the total number of comparative idioms about animals (1751 similes). In this study, we searched from three reputable English dictionary sources: Cambridge Idiom Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, and Oxford Idiom Dictionary, thereby finding 21 similes that use dog images:

1. Like a dog with two tails
2. As sick as a dog
3. As loyal/ *faithful* as a dog
4. Happy like a dog with a bone
5. Work like a dog
6. Like a dog's breakfast
7. Like a dog on/in heat
8. Treat like a dog
9. As selfish as the dog in the manger
10. As friendly as a golden retriever
11. As lazy as a dog
12. As clean as a hound's tooth
13. As sad as a hound dog's eye
14. Like a dirty dog
15. Dressed up like a dog's dinner
16. As tenacious as a bulldog
17. As wet as a dog's nose
18. Like a dog life
19. Die like a dog
20. As mean as a junkyard dog
21. Sleep like a dog

Vietnamese data

The Vietnamese language corpus was selected from two dictionaries: Vu Ngoc Phan's "Vietnamese proverbs, idioms, and folk songs" (2005) and Hoang Van Hanh's "Story telling of idioms and proverbs" (1988; 1990).

The results found were 21 similes below:

1. Nói dai như chó nhai giẻ rách (Talking like a dog chewing a rag)
2. Cằn nhằn như chó cắn ma (Nagging like a dog biting a ghost)
3. Tiu ngui như chó cụp đuôi (Sad as a dog with its tail between its legs)
4. Ngu như chó (Stupid as a dog)
5. Chạy như chó phải pháo (Running like a dog seeing the firecrackers)
6. Bẩn như chó (Dirty as a dog)
7. Dại như chó (Foolish as a dog)
8. Nhục như chó (Humiliated as a dog)
9. Bơ vơ như chó lạc nhà (Alone as a dog getting lost)
10. Chạy rông như chó dái (Running around like an adult male dog)
11. Chực như chó chực cối (Waiting like a dog waiting for a mortar)
12. Chửi như chó ăn vãi mắm (Cursing like a dog eating fish sauce)
13. Đen như mõm chó (Black as a dog's muzzle)
14. Lang lảng như chó cái trốn con (Wandering around like a mother dog hiding from her puppies)
15. Làu bàu như chó hóc xương (Grumbling like a dog choking on a bone)
16. Loanh quanh như chó nằm chổi (Wandering around like a dog lying on a broom)
17. Nhanh như chó chạy ngoài đồng (Fast as a dog running in the field)
18. Lơ láo như chó thấy thóc (Negligent like a dog seeing grain)
19. Ngồi như chó ngó tát ao (Sitting like a dog watching bailing water out of the pond)
20. Ngồi xó rỏ như chó tiền ruồi (Sitting in a corner like a half-dollar dog)
21. Ngay lưng như chó trèo chạn (Lazy as a dog climbing a cupboard)

Findings

Dog similes in English

Definition of "dog" in English dictionary

In the Cambridge, Collins, and Oxford dictionaries, the noun "dog" has the following four meaning classes:

- a common animal with four legs, fur, and a tail, often kept as a pet or trained for work, for example, hunting or guarding
- an unattractive woman (derogatory expression, slang)
- a man who is dishonest or does something evil (derogatory expression, slang)
- a thing of low quality; a failure

*Structure of dog similes in English***Table 1.**

Structure of dog similes in English

Structure			
As + Adjective + As + Noun/Noun phrase	Verb + Like + Noun	Like + Noun	Adjective + Like + Noun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As sick as a dog • As loyal/ faithful as a dog • As selfish as the dog in the manger • As friendly as a golden retriever • As lazy as a dog • As sad as a hound dog's eye • As tenacious as a bulldog • As wet as a dog's nose • As mean as a junkyard dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work like a dog • Treat like a dog • Die like a dog • Sleep like a dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a dog with two tails • Like a dog's breakfast • Like a dog on/in heat • Like a dirty dog • Like a dog life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy like a dog with a bone • Dressed up like a dog's dinner • Clean as a hound's tooth
9/21 (43%)	4/21 (19%)	5/21 (24%)	3/21 (14%)

It can be seen from Table 1 that the majority of similes use the structure As + Adjective + As + Noun/Noun phrase with 9/21 similes, accounting for 43%. English similes commonly use this structure to create vivid comparisons by linking quality with a relatable image. It strengthens descriptive language and conveys meaning concisely. The Like + Noun structure accounts for 24% with 5 similes. The structure Verb + Like + Noun accounts for 19% with 4 similes. There are 3 similes (13%) using the structure Adjective + Like + Noun. The structures used in English similes are generally similar to those in other languages. A simile has four key components. They are the topic or tenor, the vehicle, the event, and the comparator.

*Meaning of dog similes in English***Table 2.**

Meaning of dog similes in English

No	English similes	Meaning	Positive (+) Negative (-)
1	Like a dog with two tails	To be tremendously happy	+
2	As sick as a dog	Very ill	-
3	As faithful as a dog	To be loyal and devoted	+
4	Like a dog with a bone	To be fixated on a particular topic	+
5	Work like a dog	To work very hard	+
6	Like a dog's breakfast	To be messy or poorly done	-
7	Like a dog on/in heat	Very energetic and enthusiastic, especially when sexually aroused	+
8	Treat like a dog	<i>To treat one with disrespect or contempt</i>	-
9	As selfish as the dog in the manger	People tend to selfishly keep things that they do not really need or want so that others may not use or enjoy them.	-
10	As friendly as a golden retriever	To be extroverted, easily excitable, and happy about life (golden retriever is a kind of dogs)	+
11	As lazy as a dog	Very lazy	-
12	As clean as a hound's tooth	Very clean, very innocent	+
13	As sad as a hound dog's eye	Very sad, pitiful	-
14	Like a dirty dog	To be deemed to be despicable or contemptible	-
15	Dressed up like a dog's dinner	To wear very formal or decorative clothes in a way that attracts attention	-
16	As tenacious as a bulldog	To be tough, tenacious, and gets things done, especially in the face of adversity	+
17	As wet as a dog's nose	Very wet	-
18	Like a dog life	A difficult, boring, and unhappy life	-
19	Die like a dog	To die in a painful and shameful way	-
20	As mean as a junkyard dog.	A very mean and combative person willing to use any means necessary in defense of something	-
21	Sleep like a dog	To sleep in a way that one cannot be easily woken up.	-

Analysis of positive and negative meanings of dog similes in English shows the appearance of positive and negative meanings, in which negative meanings dominate 62% with 13/21 positive meanings. Extremely more modest with 8/21 similes (38%). In English, dog-related similes carry both positive and negative meanings because dogs embody diverse characteristics, from loyalty to aggression. Positive similes like “as faithful as a dog” or “work like a dog” highlight dedication and hard work. However, negative dog similes are more common, such as “as sick as a dog” or “like a dog's life,” which emphasize hardship or unappealing traits.

Table 3.

Examples of dog similes in English

No	English examples
1	He was like a dog with two tails when he was given the first prize.
2	<i>As sick as a dog</i> , he can't walk without a stick
3	His old butler was <i>as faithful as a dog</i> .
4	I was late once, and my boss is <i>like a dog with a bone</i> , bringing it up every chance she gets.
5	He <i>worked like a dog</i> to earn money to raise his family.
6	He's made these accounts <i>like a real dog's breakfast</i> .
7	She was super hot and looking at me <i>like a dog on heat!</i>
8	She <i>treats me like a dog</i> .
9	She is <i>as selfish as the dog</i> in the manger
10	Amy's welcoming smile made her <i>as friendly as a golden retriever</i> , instantly putting people at ease.
11	I wish you would motivate yourself a bit more. Stop being so idle. I swear that you're <i>as lazy as a dog</i> .
12	This house needs to be <i>clean as a hound's tooth</i> before Pop comes to visit.
13	His blue eye is always <i>sad as a hound dog's</i> .
14	He tried to steal my money, <i>like a dirty dog!</i>
15	The dress code was smart, but Linda came wearing a full-length ball gown! She was <i>dressed up like a dog's dinner!</i>
16	He was <i>as tenacious as a bulldog</i> .
17	I stepped onto the carpet <i>like a healthy dog's nose</i> .
18	After 3 years of Covid-19, we live <i>like a dog life</i> .
19	The film begins with our hero stealing cars and ends with him <i>dying like a dog</i> in the street.
20	He is <i>as mean as a junkyard dog</i> .
21	I had a wonderfully restful night as I <i>slept like a dog</i> .

These above examples containing dog similes in English reflect a broad view of dogs' characteristics, illustrating both admirable and unfavorable qualities. Positive dog similes, such as "as faithful as a dog" or "work like a dog," emphasize dedication, loyalty, and resilience, traits valued in animals and people. In contrast, negative similes like "as sick as a dog" or "like a dog life" often highlight weakness, misfortune, or decline. This range of expressions mirrors the complex human-dog relationship: while dogs are cherished for loyalty and companionship, cultural history sometimes associates them with dirtiness, illness, or hardship, explaining the prevalence of negative imagery. It can be concluded that dog similes can be used to create vivid imagery or draw surprising connections between two related or unrelated things.

Dog similes in Vietnamese

Definition of "dog" in Vietnamese dictionary

In Vietnamese, three words, "chó," "câu," and "khuyển," exist at the same time, all referring to this animal. Among them, "câu" and "khuyển" are Chinese loanwords used with a lower frequency than "chó", which is a pure Vietnamese word. In "Vietnamese dictionary," by Hoang Phe (2011), explains that dog is a noun, with two basic meanings:

- First, it refers to animals that are often raised to keep the house or hunt or eat meat;
- Second, it refers to a despicable person and is also used as a scolding word.

In particular, the second meaning belongs to the metaphorical meaning layer; from the source domain of dogs, this animal's evil and despicable characteristics are mapped onto the target domain, indicating people who lack personality are condemned by society and scorned.

Structure of Vietnamese similes

Table 4.

Structure of dog similes in Vietnamese

Structure			
Adjective + As + Noun	Verb + Like + Noun	Verb + Like + Clause	Adjective + Like + Clause
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stupid as a dog • Dirty as a dog • Foolish as a dog • Humiliated as a dog • Black as a dog's snout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting in a corner like a half-dollar dog • Running around like an adult male dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking like a dog chewing rags • Running like a dog seeing the firecrackers • Waiting like a dog waiting for a mortar • Cursing like a dog eating fish sauce • Grumbling like a dog choking on a bone • Wandering around like a dog lying on a broom • Sitting like a dog looking at the pond • Wandering around like a female dog hiding from her children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sullen as a dog with its tail between its legs • Alone as a dog getting lost • Negligent as a dog seeing the grain • Lazy as a dog climbing a cupboard • Nagging as a dog biting a ghost • Fast as a dog running in the field
5/21 (24%)	2/21 (9%)	8/21 (38%)	6/21 (29%)

Dog similes in Vietnamese recorded the dominance of the comparative structure Verb + Like + Clause with 8/21 structures, accounting for 38%. This proves that even when comparing, Vietnamese people still prefer to use action verbs rather than property adjectives. The structures Adjective + Like + Clause and Adjective + As + Noun account for 29% and 24%, respectively. The use of comparative clauses instead of words and phrases is also worth noting. The comparative clause is a clause, accounting for 67%, compared to the comparative clause being a noun, accounting for 33%. This shows the thinking of Vietnamese people who want to describe detailed comparative images.

*Meaning of dog similes in Vietnamese***Table 5.**

Meaning of dog similes in Vietnamese

No	Similes	Meaning	Positive (+) Negative (-)
1	Nói dai như chó nhai giẻ rách (Talking like a dog chewing rags)	Talking over and over again, vociferously and persistently (about a certain issue)	–
2	Căn nhắc như chó cắn ma (Nagging like a dog biting a ghost)	Nagging and persistent like a dog barking at night when it detects a shadow of a person lurking aimlessly	–
3	Tiu ngui như chó cụp đuôi (Sad as a dog with its tail between its legs)	Depressed and sad	–
4	Ngu như chó (Stupid as a dog)	Very stupid	–
5	Chạy như chó phải pháo (Running like a dog seeing the firecrackers)	Extremely fear	–
6	Bẩn như chó (Dirty as a dog)	1. Very dirty; 2. Stingy, stingy, selfish, narrow-minded	–
7	Dại như chó (Foolish as a dog)	Foolish	–
8	Nhục như con chó (Humiliated as a dog)	Extremely humiliating, like the dog's low status	–
9	Bơ vơ như chó lạc nhà (Alone as a dog getting lost)	Disappointed, lonely, tired and unable to determine what to do, where to go, or where to go	–
10	Chạy rông như chó đái (Running around like an adult male dog)	Wandering around looking all day, like a male dog looking for a mate during heat season	–
11	Chực như chó chực cối (Waiting like a dog waiting for a mortar)	Waiting to enjoy something	–
12	Chửi như chó ăn vãi mắm (Cursing like a dog eating fish sauce)	Cursing a lot, cursing repeatedly and torrentially	–
13	Đen như mõm chó (Black as a dog's muzzle)	1. Black and smooth, wet; 2. Bad luck meets bad luck	–
14	Lang lảng như chó cái trốn con (Wandering around like a mother dog hiding from her puppies)	Avoiding and not wanting to meet anyone to avoid trouble, such as a mother dog hiding from her little puppies that are demanding to be breastfed	–
15	Làu bàu như chó hóc xương: (Grumbling like a dog choking on a bone)	Speaking softly, mumble in your mouth with anger and discomfort	–
16	Loanh quanh như chó nằm chổi (Wandering around like a dog lying on a broom)	Survey and consider the surrounding area before performing the main, central work (dogs often walk around a few times before lying on the broom)	–
17	Nhanh như chó chạy ngoài đồng (As fast as a dog running in the field)	Passing quickly (time)	–

18	Lơ lảo như chó thấy thóc (Negligent like a dog seeing grain)	Be surprised but indifferent to things and things that have nothing to do with you	–
19	Ngồi như chó ngó tát ao (Sitting like a dog watching bailing water out of the pond)	Curious but don't understand anything	–
20	Ngồi xó rỏ như chó tiền rưỡi (Sitting in a corner like a half-dollar dog)	Sitting cowered, curled up as if there was no strength left, like the crouching style of a skinny dog (only worth half a day's worth of money)	–
21	Ngay lưng như chó trèo chạn (Lazy as a dog climbing a cupboard)	Lazy, refusing to work	–

Among the 21 Vietnamese similes selected for analysis, none have positive meanings. The fact that Vietnamese dog similes lack positive meanings largely due to cultural perspectives that differ from Western views. Traditionally, dogs in Vietnamese society have often symbolized less desirable qualities, such as dirtiness or aggressiveness, especially when roaming freely in rural areas. Expressions like “Nhục như con chó” (Humiliated as a dog) and “Đen như mõm chó” (Black as a dog's muzzle) convey misfortune, or disloyalty rather than the Western qualities of loyalty or devotion. Vietnamese similes reflect these cultural beliefs, so positive qualities like loyalty are often attributed to animals like buffaloes, which are valued for hard work and resilience, rather than dogs.

Table 6.

Examples of dog similes in Vietnamese

No	Vietnamese examples
1	<i>Nói dai như chó nhai giẻ rách.</i> Mọi người không ai muốn nghe đâu. (You are always talking like a dog chewing a rag. No one wants to listen to you.)
2	Có mỗi chuyện bé tí mà nói mãi, <i>cần nhằn như chó cắn ma</i> ấy. (There's just a little thing that keeps talking, nagging like a dog biting a ghost.)
3	Bị mẹ mắng, thằng bé <i>tiu nghiu như chó cụp đuôi</i> . (Being scolded by his mother, the boy was as depressed as a dog with his tail between his legs.)
4	Sao mà <i>ngu như chó thể hả?</i> (Why are you as stupid as a dog?)
5	Cứ mỗi lần gặp bà ta là anh ấy lại <i>chạy như chó phải pháo</i> . (Every time he sees her, he runs like a dog seeing the firecrackers.)
6	Cả tuần không chịu tắm gội, lão ta trông <i>bẩn như chó</i> . (He hadn't showered all week and looked as dirty as a dog.)
7	Thằng lớn lấy hết phần thông minh, còn thằng em thì <i>dại như chó</i> . (The older brother takes all the intelligence, but the younger brother is as foolish as a dog.)
8	Mình giống như một đứa ăn bám, mỗi tháng ngửa tay xin từng đồng, rồi bị chửi mắng, trách móc, <i>nhục như con chó</i> . (I'm like a freeloader; every month, I ask for every penny, then get scolded, blamed, and humiliated as a dog.)
9	Người mẹ gặp tai nạn, và hai đứa trẻ <i>bơ vơ như chó lạc nhà</i> . (The mother had an accident, and the two children were as alone as dogs getting lost.)
10	Nó không lúc nào chịu ngồi yên một chỗ, cả ngày <i>chạy rông như chó dái</i> . (He never sits still and runs around like an adult male dog all day.)

11	Làm thì ko làm, cứ ngồi đó <i>chực như chó chực cối</i> . (They don't do anything; they just sit there waiting like a dog waiting for a mortar.)
12	Đối với con dâu, bây giờ mẹ chồng không được <i>chửi như chó ăn vãi mắm</i> đâu. (As for the daughter-in-law, now the mother-in-law is not allowed to curse like a dog eating fish sauce.)
13	“Sáng trăng em ngỡ tối trời/ Em ngồi em để cái sự đời em ra/ Sự đời như cái lá đa/ <i>Đen như mõm chó</i> , chém cha cái sự đời!” (A Vietnamese folk) (In the morning of the moon, I thought it was dark / I sat and let my life unfold / Life was like a banyan leaf / Black as a dog's snout, slashing life's fate!) (A Vietnamese folk)
14	Cậu ta không muốn gặp ai để tránh phiền toái, <i>lang lảng như chó cái trốn con</i> . (He didn't want to see anybody to avoid inconveniences, so he wandered around like a mother dog hiding from her puppies.)
15	Nó có cái tính hay giận, mà đã giận thì cứ <i>làu bàu như chó hóc xương</i> . (He has an angry personality, and when he's angry, he grumbles like a dog choking on a bone.)
16	Chưa trả được nợ thì khát, sao cứ <i>loanh quanh như chó nằm chổi</i> thế. (If you can't pay your debt, then beg, why do you keep wandering around like a dog lying on a broom?)
17	Thời gian trôi nhanh như chó chạy ngoài đồng. (Time passes quickly like a dog running in the field.)
18	Thấy kẻ cắp móc túi người ta mà hắn cứ đứng <i>lơ láo như chó thấy thóc</i> vậy. (Seeing a thief picking someone's pocket, he just stood there indifferently like a dog seeing grain.)
19	Những người dân làng hiếu kỳ tập trung xem chuyện gì đáng xảy ra, <i>ngồi như chó ngó tát ao</i> . (Curious villagers gathered around to see what was happening, sitting like a dog watching bailing water out of the pond.)
20	Ngồi tử tế xem nào. <i>Đừng ngồi xó rọ như chó tiền rưỡi</i> nữa. (Sit properly and watch! Don't sit in a corner like a half-dollar dog!)
21	Cô ta không làm gì cả ngày. Cô ta <i>ngay lưng như chó trèo chạn</i> . (She did nothing all day. She was lazy like a dog climbing a cupboard.)

The examples above show that dogs are associated with all the bad things when used to express human personality according to Vietnamese beliefs. Therefore, the element referring to dogs in Vietnamese idioms has a large number of negative meanings. All the characteristics, personalities, and actions of this animal are associated with the evil characteristics and actions of humans.

Similarities between English dog similes and Vietnamese dog similes

Dog similes in English and Vietnamese record both full equivalence (simile 14 in English and simile 6 in Vietnamese) and relative equivalence (simile 11 in English and simile 21 in Vietnamese)

Regarding full equivalence, simile 11 in English, "Dirty like a dog," has an exact equivalence in Vietnamese, "Bẩn như chó." They have the same structure and meaning. In terms of relative equivalence, simile 11 in English, "As lazy as a dog," has its partner in Vietnamese, "Ngay lưng như chó trèo chạn" (simile 21), which uses the image of a dog climbing a cupboard to refer to lazy people. The similarities can be explained as follows.

Structure

As can be seen in Table 1 and Table 3, English similes use comparative structures “as.... as” or “like”. In Vietnamese, similes are used with the general structure "A như B", in which A is the object of comparison, B is the comparison, and "như" (like) is the word expressing the comparison relationship (marker). Thus, comparative idioms about dogs in English and Vietnamese are similar in terms of structure. The compared part can be a verb or an adjective. The comparative clause is the word “dog” or an expression or phrase with the image of a dog.

Meaning

As can be seen in Table 2 and Table 4, as a unit with an identifying function, similes also have the phenomenon of multiple meanings. With similes, multiple meanings appear in the images in part B. It can be affirmed that the images are symbolic and themselves create multiple meanings for similes. For example, the English simile "Like a dirty dog" literally means dirty, which figuratively means hideous and despicable. The Vietnamese idiom "Dirty as a dog" also has these two meanings. There is a similarity in the meaning of English and Vietnamese similes. Both English and Vietnamese similes used in this study can be used in both literal and figurative meanings, in which the original meaning is meaningful words and expressions. English and Vietnamese similes originate from people's experiences, from things they have seen and heard, so their origin can be understood based on language. This is very meaningful when translating similes from English to Vietnamese or from Vietnamese to English because just translating according to the original meaning is enough to understand one aspect of the simile's meaning.

Differences between English dog similes and Vietnamese dog similes

The differences between English and Vietnamese similes with dog images can be grouped into the zero equivalence category, which accounts for most selected similes (19/21). The detailed analysis can be seen as follows.

Structure

As can be seen in Table 1 and Table 3, while the English similes use the words “like” and “as” to connect the comparative clause with the compared clause, the Vietnamese similes only use the word “như”. In many other kinds of similes, the number of words used for comparison is relatively diverse: bằng, như thế, tựa, tựa... However, in all 21 dog similes found in this research, only one comparison word is recorded: “như”. Another structural difference between English and Vietnamese similes is that while the comparison clause with the image of a dog in English similes is just words and phrases, in Vietnamese, it also records a majority of clauses (14/21 similes). E.g.: Cằn nhằn như chó cắn ma (Nagging like a dog biting a ghost), Lơ lỏn như chó thấy thóc (Negligent like a dog seeing grain) ...

Meaning

Table 2 shows that among the 21 dog similes surveyed in English, 38% have positive meanings, and 62% have negative meanings. Meanwhile, of the 21 similes surveyed in Vietnamese, Table 4 reveals that 100% of similes have negative meanings. This can be explained as follows.

In the culture of most Western countries, a dog is like a friend, a confidant that people can rely on when they are lonely. Dogs are trained as officers, some are given the rank of colonel, and a warrior-style funeral is held when the dog dies. Dogs are also trained to serve human life, such as crime-catching dogs, drug detection dogs, and dogs used to test newly produced drugs. A dog can have a mansion and enough servants, its own food, including its own doctor. Old dogs can be raised for old age, so there is no need to starve, torture, and kill them if they do not want to be prosecuted by the law. This comes from the notion that dogs are friendly, loyal, and

intelligent animals with many good characteristics. Therefore, the image of a dog in English proverbs and idioms is often associated with good things. However, in English proverbs and idioms, there are a few sentences related to "dog" referring to bad, terrible, and painful things. (Lê Thị Minh Thảo, 2014)

In Asian culture, the dog is considered as an animal for meat, hunting, and housekeeping. For Vietnamese people, the dog is quite close, but from a certain angle, the dog is still only considered a guardian animal or an animal to be slaughtered and processed into a favorite dish. There is also a village specializing in Nhat Tan dog meat. According to Dang Thi Thu Hien (2006), in the treasury of Vietnamese proverbs and idioms, there are at least 70 sentences with the image of a dog. The image of a dog in Vietnamese idioms and proverbs is often associated with bad, unlucky or disrespectful things in society. For example: "stupid as a dog," "dirty as a dog," and "humiliated as a dog." In the treasure trove of Vietnamese similes, the ones about dogs take up a very large part. By studying the semantics of dogs in Vietnamese similes, we can see many wonderful, interesting, and subtle things about the nation, as well as our ancestors' cultural characteristics and aesthetic views, which were summarized many generations ago. Through a survey of the dictionary "Vietnamese proverbs, idioms, and folk songs" by Vu Ngoc Phan (2005), we found that words referring to dogs appear with a frequency of 72 times, favoring negative perception, followed by a neutral meaning and a few idioms have a positive meaning. According to Vietnamese beliefs, dogs appear with all the bad things when used to express human personality. That's why the elements referring to dogs in Vietnamese idioms appear to have a large number of negative meanings. All characteristics, personalities, and actions of this animal are associated with humans' evil characteristics and actions.

Thus, dog in Vietnamese and dog in English conveys the same conceptual meaning, but the connotative meaning of the word "dog" in each language is different.

Discussion

The findings of this study are relevant to many other studies exploring the cross-cultural gaps between the two languages in terms of structures and meaning. The study by Phuong Vu Mai (2024) is devoted to the exploration of similarities and differences between the use of idiomatic similes in English and Vietnamese. Based on the grounds of this contrastive analysis, some recommendations for teaching and learning similes within the EFL context will be proposed and discussed. Phuong Vu Mai (2024) shows that the main difference between English and Vietnamese similes lies within two categories: same topic but different vehicle and same vehicle but different topic. Some idiomatic similes in English and Vietnamese may contain the same lexical component as the source domain, which actually refers to different topics with different content values and vice versa. Therefore, she concluded that there is a widespread agreement that idiomatic similes mainly originate from the observation and connection people make during their daily lives and labor. Cultural background should be considered in explaining how the same values of content are expressed via different images in English and Vietnamese similes.

Another research by Nguyen Nhat Quang (2020) is based on cross-cultural features and semantic analysis and aims to point out the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese determination proverbs. This research can explore the cross-cultural gaps between the two languages in terms of proverbs' referents. Regarding semantics, both Vietnamese and English determination proverbs contain two main categories: proverbs with figurative and without figurative language. Besides, regarding syntactic structures and no-trope proverbs,

numerous proverbs in English and Vietnamese are in the form of negative structures. Vietnamese and English bear some striking resemblances in terms of socio-cultural use of referents. They all take inspiration from a wide variety of objects and phenomena that are easily encountered in daily life. Vietnamese and English skillfully use many combinations of figurative language to increase practicality and liveliness, which helps increase memorization. In contrast, each language's proverbs also possess many characteristics that differentiate them, namely, the levels of preference over the image chosen and the recognition of a proverb. While it is easier to recognize a proverb of determination in English, it requires more effort to consider if a Vietnamese saying is a proverb or an idiom. In terms of semantics, one noticeable feature is that English proverbs particularly like to "de-humanify" human subjects as they usually compare human beings with concrete objects or use verbs that collocate with non-human objects. This method is hardly adopted in the Vietnamese proverbs. On the other hand, Vietnamese proverbs tend to present paradoxes where human power overtakes the hindrances, which is not encountered in English proverbs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the differences between English and Vietnamese determination proverbs outnumber the similarities.

Causes of the differences

As stated above, language is an important means of helping native speakers store the results of their perceptions and experiences. Therefore, the appearance of gaps in one language compared to another is obviously related to the characteristics of native speakers' practical activities and experiences. In addition, the meaning layers of words are closely related to elements of national culture such as religion, myths, history, customs, and the geographical environment where native speakers live.

Geographical environment factors

It is worth noting that most of the similes have animal names, in addition to the literal and symbolic meaning, the rhetorical nuance is very clear, which is ridicule, disparagement, and contempt. If in the idiom about the dog, we explain that the above-mentioned person's evaluation partly comes from the reality of life and the characteristics of the animal, then with some other useful animals, we cannot find the cause. The objective causes that lead to negative nuances in idioms are all due to the conception of native speakers. The geographical environment can influence the differences in comparative dog idioms in English and Vietnamese through factors such as culture, geography, and the way people interact with dogs in each cultural background.

In Western countries, in cultures where dogs are often kept in the home and as companions, similes may reflect this close relationship. For example, "as faithful as a dog" is a common idiom in English. In Western societies, dogs are often considered part of the family; therefore, relations with dogs are often emotional and close.

In Vietnam, a country that values agriculture and considers the buffalo as the most important in their life, the dogs do not play a vital role. Especially in rural areas, where dogs are often used for agricultural or protection purposes, idioms can reflect humans' different experiences with dogs. For Vietnamese people, although dogs are the closest pets in the house, closer to humans than other animals such as pigs, chickens, buffaloes, cows, etc., they do not seem to be considered as human friends.

Custom factors

Due to different living customs, different ethnic groups obviously have cultural differences in cognitive values as well as aesthetic standards. The animal with different cultural symbols

between British and Vietnamese cultures is probably the dog. British people have a long tradition of keeping pets. In particular, domestic animals such as dogs and cats are close friends, loved and cherished. The British associate human behavior with the image of a dog. They can say you are a lucky dog, a top dog... In Vietnam, dogs are also pets and close friends to humans, but in their eyes, the dog is more known as an unsympathetic, dirty, ignorant, despicable animal and an object of contempt. In language use, Vietnamese people can insult each other with words such as mother dog, hunting dog, mangy dog, street dog...

Implication on translation and language teaching

Implications on translation

As we can see, there are several things we need to be aware of even though similes make up a very minor portion of the language. Similes in Vietnamese and similes in English differ greatly, save from a few striking parallels and coincidences that facilitate translation. Alternative interpretations can be derived from the same comparison image, and numerous alternative images can represent the same idea. Similes with distinct national identities that include human elements significantly challenge translation and interpretation. The English translation of “As stupid as a dog” should be “As stupid as a donkey”. For Vietnamese people, it is just “wrong” and pointless. Those uncomfortable, unnatural translations must be avoided at all costs. For better translations, especially when it comes to comparative idioms, several points need to be considered.

To begin with, due to the diversity of cultures among countries, language discrepancies often stem from these cultural variations. Therefore, translators must recognize the imperative of thoroughly understanding the culture to produce accurate translations. Acquiring proficiency in other cultures is undeniably challenging and time-consuming. However, what truly matters is developing a broad and profound awareness of cultural disparities, which can help prevent awkward and subpar translations while enhancing one's translation skills. Ly (2022) observed that English texts frequently employ metaphors, slang, similes, and idioms, causing confusion among Vietnamese learners attempting to grasp the figurative or implied meanings within these texts. Consequently, they tend to translate the text literally, as they fail to discern the author's true intent.

Moreover, encountering unfamiliar concepts, particularly differing perspectives or challenging idioms and expressions, is inevitable in translation. The key lies in maintaining an open mind to embrace foreign thoughts and beliefs, empathizing with their emotions, and echoing their words. It's essential to meticulously consider the context, circumstances, or situations to infer and convey the accurate meaning. Relying solely on word-for-word translation, especially with idiomatic expressions, is ill-advised, as idioms constitute distinct semantic units whose overall meaning transcends the sum of their parts. In addition, translating requires a great deal of flexibility. Translators frequently have to decide whether to translate something literally or, where required, modify it to provide a more accurate and agreeable translation.

Implications of language teaching

It is clear that successful foreign language acquisition frequently requires a strong command of one's original tongue, so it is critical to support a student's mother tongue ability. Students may often translate too literally or oversimplify from their source tongue to the target language without fully appreciating the subtle differences between the two, leading to embarrassing expressions and misunderstandings. Furthermore, cultural differences frequently provide serious difficulties, especially when it comes to idioms and similes, which impairs pupils' understanding. Therefore, in addition to teaching language proficiency, teachers should also

impart a thorough awareness of the culture linked to the target language. It is important to consistently raise pupils' knowledge of the differences in culture and society between the two languages and nations.

Moreover, teachers need to help students learn idioms, especially similes, so they can use them with assurance and appropriateness in everyday and academic settings. Teaching similes involves a number of important factors. First and foremost, teachers need to hold students' interest while raising their knowledge of the similarities and differences between similes in Vietnamese and English. It is best to start with exactly the same similes, go on to ones that are slightly similar, and then provide those that differ greatly. Students should try to explain the literal meaning of the English similes, then guess their figurative meaning before the teacher provides the simile's origin and metaphorical meaning by linking them with specific situations and asking students for the equivalent similes in Vietnamese. Second, because there are so many different types of similes in Vietnamese and English, it is not possible to teach them all. Instead, teachers should carefully choose which idioms to teach, emphasizing English idioms that are widely used and free of ambiguity or intricate grammatical structures. Thirdly, teachers can organize similes into different groupings related to animals, nature, colors, and activities to make the learning process more efficient.

Finally, in addition to instructing students on similes, it's crucial to encourage their application in both spoken conversations and written compositions. The teacher should lead by example in this regard. As discussed earlier, similes, with their symbolic and figurative meanings, contribute to the richness and emphasis of language, rendering every interaction more captivating and dynamic. In a study by Ghaemi (2022) investigating phraseological units in IELTS academic writing task 2 and candidates' perceptions of phraseological competence, it was observed that similes were absent. Moreover, the sole instance of a proverb's usage by a candidate with a low band score (band 4) had a detrimental impact on the assigned score, resulting in a deduction of marks.

Conclusion

Culture has a powerful influence on language, and language plays an honest and prominent role as a mirror reflecting culture. There are many similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese similes about the dog, mainly due to cultural differences. The same comparison image can sometimes lead to different meanings and vice versa, the same meaning can be expressed by many different images. Studying similes in two languages really helps gain a lot of valuable things, including increasing knowledge of idioms, a better understanding of culture, and improving research ability as well as language contrasting methods. Furthermore, after the research, many good points were drawn that can be applied to language teaching and translation.

This article has analyzed and discussed the cultural symbolism present in the similes referring to dogs in Vietnamese and English by comparing dog images and their cultural symbols. The analysis results show that the words for animals of each language have unique cultural characteristics due to the influence of factors such as geographical circumstances and customs. Besides, the semantic symbols of similes with dog elements in Vietnamese and English both have interesting similarities. Understanding the semantic characteristics of words for dogs in English and Vietnamese similes contributes to discovering new things about the two nations' life, customs, practices, culture, and thinking. It also helps us see humans' sophistication and wonderful creativity when perceiving animals in general and the image of dogs in particular.

In short, in this study, from the interface between language and culture perspective, we present some features in the use of dog images in Vietnamese similes compared with English. While the image of a dog appearing in English similes has both positive and negative meanings, in Vietnamese similes it only has negative meanings. According to Pham Ngoc Ham (2018), the backward and fragmented agricultural production system and continuous natural disasters are common in the Asian community. In the past, eating well and being warm was the dream of many generations of people. In that context, dogs in the eyes of Eastern people, especially China and Vietnam, also have characteristics that reflect historical imprints.

Limitations

As it is virtually impossible to find a dictionary or a corpus that synthesizes all the existing Vietnamese and English similes, this study, albeit against the authors' will, cannot account for all the dog similes in both languages. Also, the author cannot cover all linguistic and cultural aspects of Vietnamese and English dog similes within this article. Also, there are no previous studies about determination proverbs from the cross-cultural contrast analysis perspective to confirm or elaborate more on our research findings.

Suggestions for future research

First, further studies can focus on other linguistic forms. Dog similes reflected in poems, moments on social networks, or daily communications can be recruited as the subjects for a cross-cultural comparison. Second, this study compares two cultures that are considered to be quite different in terms of cultural dimensions. Future studies can focus on the differences in dog similes between Vietnamese people and people from a culture similar to Vietnamese, like Chinese.

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