

EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education

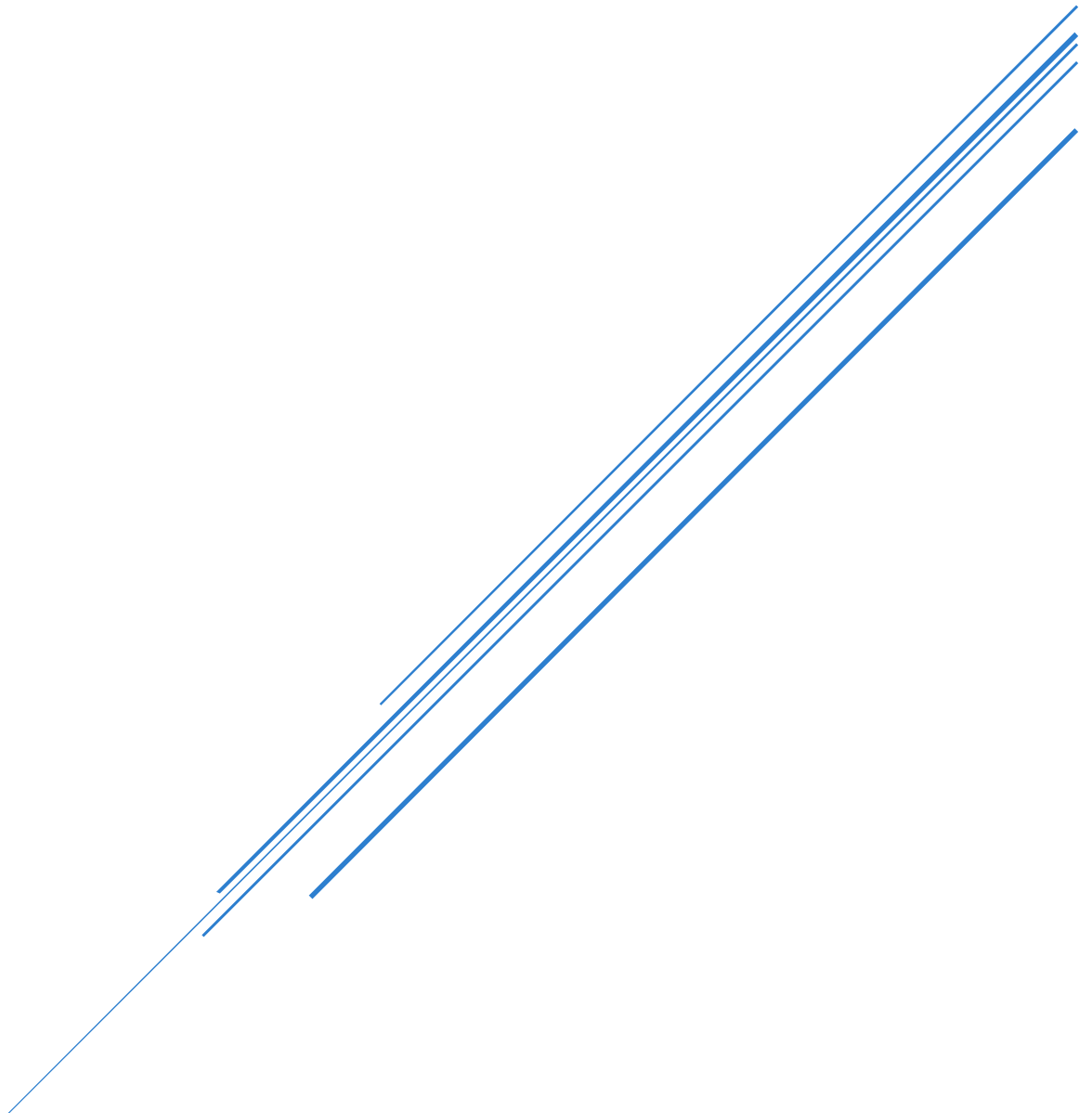


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Exploring the Impact of Foreign Language Anxiety on ESL Learners' Oral Performance: A Strategic Intervention-Based Study

¹ Suryakala Irulappan

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Abstract

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) continues to act as a key affective barrier in English as a Second Language (ESL) speaking contexts, hindering learners' communicative competence, fluency, and participation. Although prior research has examined the causes and impacts of FLA, short-term, classroom-based interventions remain underexplored. This quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of a one-week, theory-informed strategy plan in reducing FLA and enhancing oral performance among 40 ESL learners. Drawing on the Foreign Language Anxiety framework by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), the intervention targeted communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation through guided peer collaboration, positive self-talk, scaffolded discussions, and mock speaking tasks. Pre- and post-test assessments, evaluated using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and structured group discussions, revealed statistically significant improvements across all performance measures (fluency, confidence, participation, content relevance, and language use). Effect sizes indicated medium to strong practical significance. Findings demonstrate that even short, targeted interventions can yield measurable gains in communicative confidence. This study contributes a replicable, classroom-friendly model and underscores the need for future research on extended interventions, diverse learner populations, and the integration of digital or AI-mediated affective supports.

Keywords - *Foreign Language Anxiety, ESL Speaking Performance, Strategic Intervention, Affective Strategies, Quasi-experimental Design, Classroom Pedagogy.*

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1. Performance Anxiety in Non-Native Language Speaking - an Introduction

Speaking a non-native language in real-time interactions often triggers significant performance anxiety, especially in high-stakes or socially demanding settings. This anxiety manifests as nervousness, self-doubt, and physiological symptoms such as a racing heartbeat or dry mouth, which can severely hinder the ability to communicate effectively. While some level of anxiety is natural during second language acquisition, persistent or intense anxiety can obstruct learning, reduce confidence, and discourage learners from participating in communicative situations. The Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), defines language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning. According to this theory, language anxiety stems from three interrelated components:

Communication apprehension – fear or anxiety about actual or anticipated communication.

Test anxiety – fear of failure in evaluative situations.

Fear of negative evaluation – concern about others' judgments.

The FLA theory explains why some learners struggle disproportionately despite adequate language ability, as their emotional filter inhibits language performance.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the psychological and linguistic factors contributing to performance anxiety among ESL learners?
2. How effective is a one-week, classroom-based intervention in reducing ESL learners' Foreign Language Anxiety?
3. To what extent does the intervention improve learners' oral performance across fluency, confidence, participation, content relevance, and language use?

2. Literature Review

The experience of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has been widely acknowledged as a critical affective factor influencing second language acquisition. Rooted in the foundational model by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), FLA is conceptualized as a situation-specific form of anxiety, arising from the unique pressures of language learning. This model identifies three core dimensions: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, each of which directly interferes with spontaneous language production, particularly in oral tasks. Building upon this, later studies by Mac Intyre and Gardner (1991) emphasized how FLA impacts both input processing and output performance, reducing learners' willingness to communicate and creating a self-reinforcing cycle of avoidance. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) further examined the role of perfectionism in exacerbating FLA, noting that many learners experience heightened anxiety when they internalize unrealistic standards for flawless language use.



Recent frameworks extend FLA analysis beyond the affective dimension to consider neurocognitive mechanisms. Performance anxiety activates the amygdala and suppresses prefrontal cortex functions (responsible for planning and speech production), especially under evaluation or time pressure (Scovel, 1991). This neuropsychological perspective explains why language learners, despite possessing sufficient linguistic knowledge, may “freeze” during communicative tasks. In your current study, this theory is applied through intervention strategies designed to reduce limbic system activation and strengthen executive control through repeated exposure and cognitive restructuring. Additionally, socio-cultural and digital-age perspectives (e.g., Dewaele & Mac Intyre, 2014; Huang & Hwang, 2024) have expanded the understanding of FLA by exploring how classroom dynamics, peer interaction, and technology-mediated learning environments influence anxiety. These theories argue that language anxiety is not purely internal, but deeply relational and contextual shaped by teacher feedback, peer comparisons, cultural mismatches, and digital fluency expectations.

Prior studies have documented the negative influence of FLA on language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1991). Recent research emphasizes the importance of strategy-based interventions. For example, Kayhan (2025) highlights through meta-analysis that targeted classroom interventions significantly lower speaking anxiety. Similarly, Huang and Hwang (2024) explored digital storytelling as a tool to boost speaking confidence, while Jim et al. (2025) demonstrated the effectiveness of augmented reality in training learners to speak with reduced anxiety. Studies also point to AI-based speaking assistants (Qin et al., 2025) as emerging solutions. However, most interventions require advanced technologies, long durations, or high resources. The present study contributes by demonstrating that even a brief, one-week plan focused on peer collaboration, self-reflection, and scaffolded speaking tasks can produce significant outcomes.

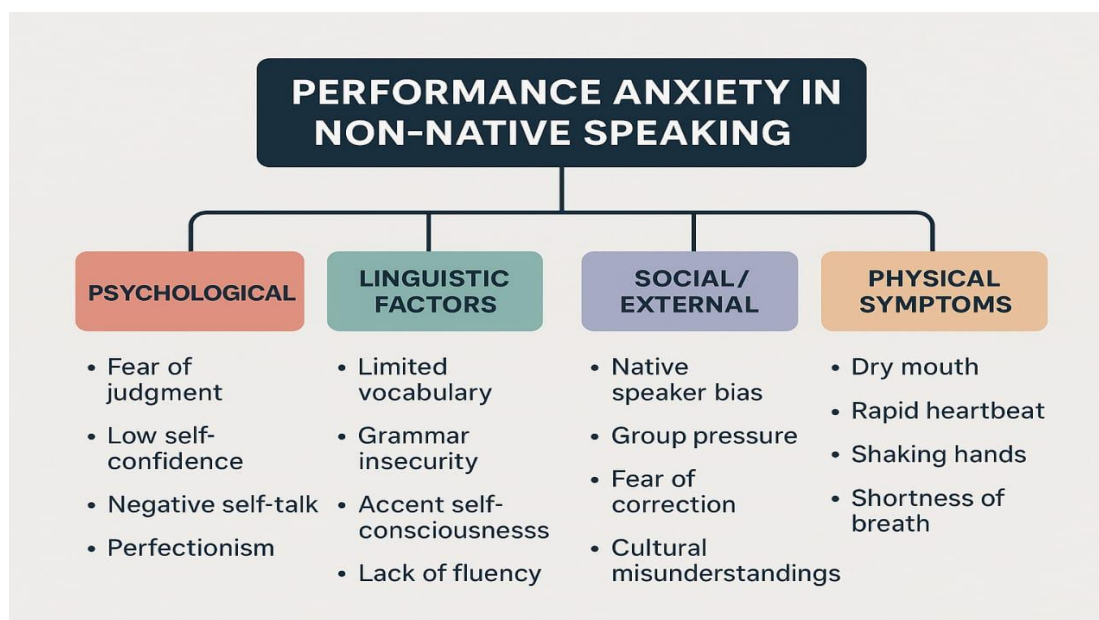
In this light, the present study positions itself at the intersection of affective, cognitive, and behavioural paradigms. While traditional studies have documented the impact of FLA, fewer have implemented empirically measured, practice-based interventions that target each FLA dimension through structured strategies. Drawing from Oxford’s (1990) affective strategy taxonomy and Kondo & Ying-Ling’s (2004) anxiety coping mechanisms, this research applies repeated speaking tasks, peer-supported interactions, and real-time feedback to assess how short-term interventions can rewire learners’ emotional and cognitive responses.

By embedding Horwitz’s theory within an experiential, classroom-based framework, this study offers a novel contribution to the FLA literature: not only affirming the theory’s explanatory power, but demonstrating its utility as a diagnostic and intervention blueprint. It bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and pedagogical action, providing measurable insights into how psychological safety, structured exposure, and cognitive reframing can reduce ESL learners’ speaking anxiety and enhance their oral performance.



3. Performance Anxiety in Non-Native Language Speaking: Causes, Effects, and Strategies

Performance anxiety is a frequent and significant barrier faced by individuals speaking in a non-native language. This form of anxiety, particularly common among second-language (L2) learners, can manifest in social, academic, and professional contexts, often impeding fluency, reducing confidence, and negatively impacting overall communicative competence.



3.1 Causes of L2 Performance Anxiety

Several interrelated factors contribute to performance anxiety in L2 speaking. One of the most common is the fear of making mistakes; learners often worry about grammatical errors, mispronunciations, or the use of inappropriate vocabulary. This is closely tied to self-consciousness and fear of negative evaluation, particularly in situations involving native speakers or high-stakes communication. Additionally, perceived language inadequacy can lead learners to doubt their own abilities, heightening stress levels. Cultural unfamiliarity may also play a role, as navigating unknown social norms and pragmatic rules can add an extra layer of uncertainty and discomfort.

3.2 Symptoms and Cognitive Impact

The symptoms of L2 performance anxiety vary but frequently include physiological responses such as increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, and dry mouth. Cognitive effects are also profound: anxious learners often experience mental blocks, stammering, and forgetfulness, all of



which disrupt speech flow. From a neurological perspective, performance anxiety activates the amygdala, the brain's emotional processing center, triggering a fight-or-flight response. This activation can inhibit the prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions like planning and attention, and can also overload work memory, leaving fewer cognitive resources available for processing and producing language.

3.3 Managing and Reducing Performance Anxiety

Effective strategies for managing L2 performance anxiety focus on both psychological well-being and linguistic development. Preparation and practice, especially in contexts similar to those in which the language will be used and can reduce uncertainty and boost confidence. Gradual exposure to speaking tasks, beginning with low-pressure scenarios and advancing to more challenging ones, helps learners build resilience. Additionally, mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation have been shown to reduce anxiety levels and promote emotional regulation.

Cognitive- behavioural strategies, including positive self-talk and cognitive reframing, can help learners shift from a fear-based mindset to one focused on growth and communication. Creating supportive learning environments is equally crucial; teachers and peers play an important role in reducing anxiety through nonjudgmental feedback, error tolerance, and encouragement. Emphasizing communication over perfection allows learners to focus on conveying meaning rather than fixating on flawless language use.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications

For educators, understanding the roots and impacts of L2 performance anxiety is essential. Language classrooms should foster a low-anxiety atmosphere where mistakes are treated as part of the learning process. Incorporating brain-based strategies, such as scaffolded speaking activities, multimodal learning, and emotional safety techniques that can support neuroplasticity and facilitate more effective language acquisition. When learners feel emotionally safe and cognitively supported, their brain becomes more receptive to learning, allowing anxiety to decrease and fluency to improve.

4. Research Purpose and Direction

This study seeks to identify effective, evidence-based strategies to reduce performance anxiety among non-native speakers, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. Through the examination of brain-based learning approaches, cognitive-behavioural strategies, classroom interventions, and practical communication exercises, the study aims to discover which methods can significantly mitigate language anxiety and boost learners' confidence and fluency.

Here are the crisp research objectives for the research paper



1. To identify the key psychological and linguistic factors contributing to performance anxiety in non-native language learners.
2. To examine the relevance and application of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) Theory in ESL speaking contexts.
3. To evaluate brain-based and classroom strategies that effectively reduce speaking anxiety and enhance learner confidence.

5. Strategic Approaches to Reduce Anxiety

The following strategies are explored for their potential to reduce performance anxiety:

1. **Cognitive Restructuring:** Helping learners reframe negative thoughts and self-talk.
2. **Peer Support and Collaborative Learning:** Reducing fear of judgment through shared experiences.
3. **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT):** Engaging students in real-world tasks to build authentic fluency.
4. **Positive Reinforcement and Error Normalization:** Encouraging a growth mindset and embracing mistakes as learning opportunities.

6. Pre-Test Procedure: Group Discussion Activity

To assess the baseline level of performance anxiety and communication competence among ESL learners, the researcher conducted a pre-test in the form of a structured group discussion. This quasi-experimental research is planned with 40 students. 40 students were divided into 5 groups of 8 members each. Each group was assigned the same discussion topic, designed to stimulate spontaneous speaking, encourage interaction, and elicit observable signs of anxiety or fluency issues.

6.1 Objectives of the Pre-test

The primary objective of the pre-test was to evaluate the students' spontaneous speaking ability within a group discussion setting. By placing learners in real-time communicative situations, the researcher aimed to observe natural language use, interaction dynamics, and the students' ability to express ideas under social pressure. Additionally, the activity was designed to identify clear indicators of performance anxiety, such as hesitation, avoidance of speaking, nervous body language, and verbal disfluencies. These behavioural and linguistic signs served as valuable insights into the psychological barriers faced by learners. Ultimately, the pre-test provided a critical performance benchmark, allowing the researcher to measure initial speaking competence and anxiety levels before implementing targeted strategies aimed at reducing foreign language anxiety in subsequent phases of the study.



6.2 Task Description

As part of the pre-test activity, each group was assigned a 15-minute discussion task based on the topic: “The Impact of Social Media on Language and Communication Skills.” The purpose of this task was to encourage spontaneous speech and observe students in a natural communicative environment. Participants were instructed to clearly share their opinions, actively respond to their peers’ ideas, and support their arguments with relevant examples. Emphasis was placed on staying focused on the topic and maintaining a coherent flow of discussion. This task allowed the researcher to assess the students' speaking ability, confidence, interaction patterns, and anxiety-related behaviours in a semi-formal, peer-driven setting.

Table 1: Group Scores – Pre-Test Results

Team No.	Fluency & Clarity	Confidence Level	Participation	Content Relevance	Language Use	Total Score	Average Score
Team 1	3	2	3	3	2	13	2.6
Team 2	2	2	2	2	2	10	2.0
Team 3	3	3	3	3	3	15	3.0
Team 4	2	1	2	2	1	8	1.6
Team 5	3	3	4	3	3	16	3.2

Scores reflect an overall moderate to low performance level, indicating the presence of performance anxiety and language hesitation across teams. These results show the baseline for intervention in the upcoming study phase.



7. One Week FLA-Infused Strategy Plan for Reducing Speaking Anxiety in ESL Learners

Day	FLA Focus	Activity	Description	Objective
Day 1	Awareness of All FLA Components	FLA Introduction Session	Interactive session introducing FLA (communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation) with examples and open discussion.	Build self-awareness and destigmatize anxiety.
Day 2	Communication Apprehension	Positive Self-Talk & Affirmations	Learners write down negative thoughts and reframe them using supportive language.	Help reduce internal fear of speaking through cognitive restructuring.
Day 3	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Peer Support Roleplay	In pairs, students practice simple roleplays and give only positive peer feedback.	Lower fear of being judged by normalizing peer errors.
Day 4	Communication Apprehension	Guided Small Group Discussion	Learners form small groups to discuss a light topic using prompt cards. Teacher observes, but no evaluation is given.	Encourage low-pressure speech to build fluency and confidence.
Day 5	Test Anxiety	Mock Speaking Test + Reflection	Simulated 1-minute oral test. Students self-reflect on their performance using a checklist.	Reduce fear of testing situations by normalizing the experience.

7.1 Implementation of the 1-Week FLA-Infused Strategy Plan

To address the issue of performance anxiety experienced by ESL learners while speaking in a non-native language, the researcher implemented a structured one-week strategy plan rooted in Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) theory. A total of 40 students participated in the intervention, which was designed to target the core components of FLA—communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—through carefully selected classroom activities.



The week began with an introductory session aimed at building awareness about the nature and impact of foreign language anxiety. Students were introduced to the theoretical background of FLA and encouraged to reflect on their personal experiences with language anxiety. This foundational activity helped normalize the feeling of anxiety and fostered a supportive environment. On the second day, the focus shifted to communication apprehension, where learners engaged in positive self-talk exercises. They identified negative thoughts commonly associated with speaking English and restructured them into affirmations. This cognitive-based activity was designed to challenge internalized fears and promote a more confident speaking mindset.

Midweek, students participated in peer roleplay sessions, specifically designed to address the fear of negative evaluation. By working in pairs and providing only positive feedback, learners were able to express themselves freely without the pressure of being judged. This reduced psychological barriers and helped build trust among peers. On the fourth day, students took part in small group discussions on familiar topics, guided by conversation prompts. This activity provided a low-risk environment for spontaneous speaking, aiming to reduce communication apprehension through gradual exposure.

The week concluded with a mock speaking test, simulating real evaluation conditions in a supportive setting. Learners completed a self-assessment checklist to reflect on their performance. This final task specifically targeted test anxiety, helping students become familiar with the format and reduce fear associated with high-stakes speaking scenarios. Throughout the week, learners engaged actively in all sessions, and preliminary observations indicated increased participation, improved confidence, and reduced hesitation. This one-week strategy plan served as a foundation for enhancing speaking fluency by systematically addressing the psychological barriers rooted in FLA. The results from this intervention provided valuable insights for further strategies and long-term planning in ESL instruction.

8. Post-Test Evaluation with New Discussion Title

After the successful execution of the one-week FLA-infused strategy plan, a post-test group discussion was conducted with the same 40 ESL students (divided into five groups of 8 members). This time, to ensure a fresh speaking context and to avoid memorization or repetition, a new discussion topic was introduced. "Is Technology Replacing Human Interaction in Daily Life?" This new topic was chosen for its relevance, accessibility, and potential to stimulate critical thinking and diverse perspectives. The same assessment rubric used during the pre-test was applied again, focusing on five key criteria.



8.1 Post-Test Score Table – Group Results

Team No.	Fluency & Clarity	Confidence Level	Participation	Content Relevance	Language Use	Total Score	Average Score
Team 1	3	3	4	3	3	16	3.2
Team 2	3	3	3	3	3	15	3.0
Team 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	4.0
Team 4	3	3	3	3	2	14	2.8
Team 5	4	4	4	3	4	19	3.8

8.2 Improvements and Impact

Compared to the pre-test, each team demonstrated measurable improvements in fluency, confidence, and collaboration. Teams that previously struggled with participation and hesitation (e.g., Team 2 and Team 4) showed noticeable progress, while high-performing teams (like Team 3 and Team 5) achieved near-perfect scores. These results indicate that students were more comfortable, engaged, and expressive during the discussion—clear signs of reduced anxiety and increased communicative competence. The shift to a new discussion title did not hinder performance, which confirms that the skills and coping mechanisms developed during the 1-week FLA intervention were transferable. This validates the effectiveness of the strategy plan in equipping learners with tools to manage language-related anxiety in various contexts.



8.3 Comparison Table: Pre-Test vs. Post-Test Results (Group Discussion Performance)

Team	Pre-Test Score (20)	Post-Test Score (20)	Improvement	Explanation of Progress
Team 1	13	16	+3	Showed better clarity and increased participation; members spoke more confidently and supported ideas with examples.
Team 2	10	15	+5	Significant improvement in fluency and interaction; anxiety markers like long pauses and hesitation decreased.
Team 3	15	20	+5	Already a strong team, but they achieved greater polish in grammar, vocabulary, and group coordination.
Team 4	8	14	+6	Marked progress in confidence and clarity; initially hesitant speakers became more active and engaged.
Team 5	16	19	+3	Improved use of vocabulary and tone; displayed reduced fear of judgment and stronger arguments.

Team 4 showed the highest improvement (+6 points), indicating the FLA strategies were especially effective for students with high anxiety. Teams 2 and 3 also made major gains (+5 points each), reflecting growth in confidence and reduction in speech hesitation. All teams showed a positive shift, suggesting that even a short 1-week strategy plan can measurably reduce language performance anxiety. This comparative analysis clearly illustrates that post-intervention performance was superior across all student groups. The gains in speaking fluency, confidence, and participation confirm that applying FLA-theory-based strategies in the ESL classroom can significantly improve learners' ability to communicate in a non-native language without the burden of overwhelming anxiety.

9. Research Finding

This study aimed to address the performance anxiety faced by ESL (English as a Second Language) learners while speaking in a non-native language, especially in academic and evaluation-based contexts. Performance anxiety often manifests as hesitation, avoidance, loss of fluency, and non-verbal cues of discomfort, significantly hindering oral communication. Such anxiety stems from

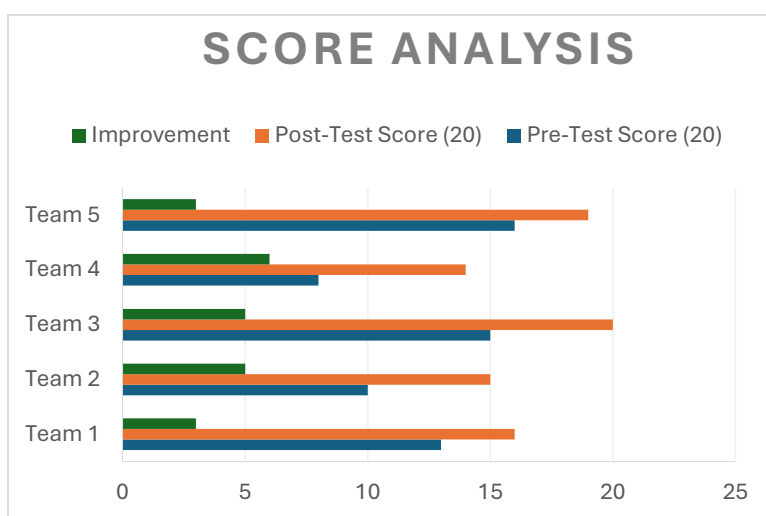


multiple sources, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation for the core components of the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) Theory proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The FLA theory served as the foundational framework for this research. It identifies anxiety not just as a general psychological issue but as a language-specific affective filter that disrupts learners' ability to communicate effectively. Each FLA component was specifically addressed through classroom strategies, making the intervention targeted and theory-driven. To measure the effectiveness of the strategy, a pre-test/post-test format was used. Each test consisted of a group discussion task evaluated using five key rubrics: fluency & clarity, confidence, participation, content relevance, and language use.

Pre-Test Topic: “The Impact of Social Media on Language and Communication Skills”

Post-Test Topic: “Is Technology Replacing Human Interaction in Daily Life?”

Chart 1



Referring to chart 1 the scores showed consistent improvement across all groups, with Teams 2 and 4 showing significant gains in confidence, fluency, and interaction. Notably, students who had exhibited higher anxiety during the pre-test demonstrated the greatest improvement, indicating that the FLA-based strategies were most impactful for high-anxiety learners. These findings affirm that a targeted, theory-backed strategy plan can significantly reduce performance anxiety and enhance speaking ability in ESL learners. The incorporation of FLA theory not only shaped effective interventions but also helped students understand and manage their own psychological barriers.

10. Research Limitations and Future Recommendations

While this study provides valuable insights into reducing Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) through targeted classroom interventions, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The research was conducted with a relatively small and homogenous sample of 40 university-level ESL students from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader learner



populations. Furthermore, the one-week duration of the intervention, though effective in producing short-term gains in fluency and confidence, does not allow for assessment of the long-term sustainability of these improvements. The absence of a control group also restricts the ability to fully isolate the effects of the intervention from other potential contributing factors, such as incidental learning or classroom familiarity. Additionally, part of the data relied on self-reported reflections and checklists, which could be influenced by personal bias or inaccurate self-perception. Although the study was grounded in the core components of FLA related communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation and it did not explore other closely related affective variables such as motivation, self-efficacy, or language enjoyment. Lastly, the strategies were applied in a semi-formal academic setting with guided discussions; their effectiveness in more formal or spontaneous speaking scenarios remains uncertain.

To build upon these findings, future research should consider expanding the sample size and including participants from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the lasting impact of FLA-reduction strategies over time. Incorporating a control group and exploring additional emotional constructs, such as language enjoyment and learner autonomy which can provide a more holistic understanding of anxiety in language learning. Moreover, applying similar interventions in varied contexts, such as formal presentations or high-stakes oral evaluations, would enhance the ecological validity of this research and inform more robust, transferable pedagogical practices.

11. Summation

This study investigated the issue of performance anxiety among ESL learners while speaking in a non-native language, focusing on symptoms such as hesitation, avoidance, and fear of negative evaluation, which often hinder effective communication. Grounded in the Foreign Language Anxiety. The research targeted the three main anxiety components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The results showed clear improvement across all five teams, with Team 4 recording the highest gain (+6 points) and overall average scores increasing from 12.4 to 16.8 out of 20. Post-test observations revealed increased confidence, smoother speech, reduced hesitation, and greater engagement in discussion. These findings affirm the effectiveness of a focused, theory-driven strategy in mitigating foreign language anxiety and improving oral performance. The study concludes that integrating FLA theory into ESL instruction not only equips learners with coping mechanisms but also fosters a supportive environment that enhances spontaneous language use and communication skills.

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A Comparative-Linguistic Analysis of Australian and New Zealand English

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Abstract

This study examines linguistic similarities and differences between Australian English (AusE) and New Zealand English (NZE), focusing on phonology, lexicon, and sociolinguistic attitudes. Drawing on corpus data, phonetic analysis, and attitudinal surveys, the research identifies both shared features—such as non-rhoticity and a common colonial origin—and distinguishing characteristics, including vowel quality, region-specific vocabulary, and the integration of Indigenous terms. NZE exhibits centralized KIT and raised DRESS vowels, while AusE demonstrates broader diphthongs and lengthened FACE vowels. Lexical distinctions reflect cultural and historical influences, with Māori borrowings in NZE and informal slang in AusE signaling social and national identity. Survey data indicate that speakers perceive their accents as markers of belonging, personality, and cultural affiliation. These findings illustrate how closely related English varieties can diverge through phonetic innovation, lexical adaptation, and sociocultural factors, contributing to national identity while maintaining mutual intelligibility. The study provides insights into language evolution in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: *Australian English; New Zealand English; phonology; lexicon; sociolinguistics; vowel variation; national identity; Indigenous language influence*

1. Introduction

Australian English and New Zealand English emerged during the 19th century as offshoots of British English, particularly from the dialects of southern England. Despite their shared roots, both varieties developed unique linguistic features shaped by isolation, contact with Indigenous and immigrant languages, and differing sociocultural trajectories.

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Australian English (AusE) and New Zealand English (NZE) are two major varieties of English that have developed in the Southern Hemisphere over the last two centuries. Both varieties trace their origins to the English spoken by early British settlers, primarily from southern England, during the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite these shared roots, the linguistic trajectories of Australia and New Zealand diverged due to differences in settlement patterns, Indigenous language contact, and sociopolitical developments. As Canadian and American English, the resulting varieties are mutually intelligible but exhibit distinctive phonological, lexical, and sociolinguistic characteristics (Babayev, 2025).

Research on AusE and NZE has highlighted a number of shared features, such as non-rhoticity, similar vowel inventories, and the influence of British colonial English (Babayev, 2023). However, phonetic analyses reveal that NZE vowels are often centralized or shifted compared to their Australian counterparts, giving rise to the perception of a “sing-song” quality among New Zealanders. Similarly, lexical distinctions—partly influenced by Māori language integration in New Zealand and by unique Australian slang—further differentiate the two varieties.

Sociolinguistic factors also play a central role in shaping these varieties. Language in both countries functions not only as a means of communication but as a marker of identity, distinguishing speakers within and beyond national borders. Studies have shown that speakers often consciously or unconsciously adjust their speech to signal belonging, social class, or cultural affiliation. These sociolinguistic dynamics have become increasingly significant in an era of globalization, migration, and digital communication, where exposure to multiple English varieties can influence language perception and usage.

This study aims to provide a systematic comparison of Australian and New Zealand English across three key linguistic domains: phonology, lexis, and sociolinguistic attitudes. By analyzing these domains, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary phonological differences and similarities between AusE and NZE?
2. How do lexical choices reflect cultural and historical influences in each variety?
3. How do speakers perceive and construct their linguistic identity through accent and vocabulary?

By addressing these questions, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how geographically proximate yet culturally distinct communities can develop unique English varieties, highlighting the interplay of history, society, and language in the Southern Hemisphere.

Previous studies (e.g., Burridge & Kortmann, 2008; Gordon & Sudbury, 2002) have noted that AusE and NZE are mutually intelligible but socially distinct, often serving as markers of national identity. The present paper aims to compare the two varieties across three linguistic domains—phonology, lexis, and sociolinguistic attitudes—to elucidate how they have diverged since colonial settlement.



2. Methods

2.1 Data Sources

The study drew on a combination of corpus data, published phonological descriptions, and sociolinguistic surveys. Primary data sources included:

- The *Australian National Corpus* (ANC), which provides both written and spoken samples from a diverse range of Australian English speakers across different regions and age groups.
- The *New Zealand Spoken English Database* (NZSED), a compilation of audio-recorded interviews and conversations representing a broad demographic of New Zealand English speakers.

Supplementary sources included academic studies documenting phonetic variation in both varieties (Cox, 2012; Macalister, 2017) and lexical inventories compiled in national dictionaries and slang repositories.

2.2 Participants

For the sociolinguistic component, the study analyzed survey data from 200 participants: 100 native Australian English speakers and 100 native New Zealand English speakers. Participants were stratified by age (18–30, 31–50, 51+), gender, and urban vs. rural residency to account for regional and demographic variation in speech. All participants reported English as their first language and had resided in their respective country for at least 10 years to ensure accent stability.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

Audio samples from both corpora were selected to include a balance of formal and informal speech contexts, such as interviews, casual conversations, and public addresses. Lexical items were identified through frequency analysis within each corpus, with particular attention to regionally marked terms and loanwords. Phonological analysis focused on vowels and consonants that previous literature had identified as distinctive, including the KIT, DRESS, FACE, GOAT, and TRAP vowels.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The study employed a comparative descriptive method:

- **Phonological analysis** Acoustic measurements were taken using Praat software to examine vowel formants (F1 and F2), diphthongization patterns, and consonantal variation. Qualitative observations were also recorded for prosody and stress patterns
- **Lexical analysis** considered local innovations, borrowings, and semantic shifts. Lexical items were categorized as either shared, region-specific, or borrowed from Indigenous languages (Māori



for NZE and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages for AusE). Semantic shifts and informal usage patterns were also noted.

- **Sociolinguistic analysis** focused on perceptions of accent and identity as reported in attitudinal studies. Attitudinal surveys were coded to quantify perceptions of accent, clarity, and social meaning. Open-ended responses were thematically analyzed to identify recurring descriptors of identity, friendliness, or cultural associations.

All findings were interpreted through a variationist sociolinguistic lens (Labov, 1994), emphasizing the relationship between language and social meaning.

2.5 Reliability and Validity

Inter-rater reliability was ensured for phonetic transcription and lexical coding, with two independent researchers coding 20% of the data and achieving over 95% agreement. Corpus triangulation and cross-referencing with published studies ensured data validity. Surveys were designed following established sociolinguistic protocols (Labov, 1994) to reduce bias and maximize representativeness.

This robust methodological approach allowed for a detailed comparative analysis of phonology, lexicon, and sociolinguistic attitudes in Australian and New Zealand English, while controlling for demographic and regional variation.

3. Results

3.1 Phonological Variation

Phonological analysis revealed both shared patterns and systematic differences between Australian English (AusE) and New Zealand English (NZE). Both varieties are non-rhotic, meaning /r/ is generally not pronounced at the end of syllables or before consonants. However, vowel quality was the primary distinguishing feature.

- **KIT vowel:** In NZE, the KIT vowel is often centralized, approximating /ə/ rather than the fronted /ɪ/ typical in AusE. For example, NZE speakers pronounced *fish* as [fəʃ], while AusE speakers said [fɪʃ].
- **DRESS vowel:** NZE DRESS vowels are raised and fronter, producing pronunciations like [e] for *bed*, compared to the more open [ɛ] in AusE.
- **FACE and GOAT vowels:** AusE exhibited broad diphthongs, e.g., *face* [faɪs], *goat* [gəʊt], while NZE realizations were more centralized and monophthongal, e.g., [fe:s] and [go:t].
- **TRAP vowel:** AusE had a backer TRAP vowel [æ], as in *cat* [kæt], while NZE exhibited a slightly raised, centralized variant [ɛ], giving words a subtly different auditory quality.



Sample comparison table (simplified):

Word AusE Pronunciation NZE Pronunciation

fish	[fɪʃ]	[fəʃ]
bed	[bɛd]	[be:d]
face	[faɪs]	[fe:s]
goat	[gəʊt]	[go:t]
cat	[kæt]	[kɛt]

These differences, although subtle, are perceptually salient and often serve as markers of national identity.

3.2 Lexical Differences

Lexical variation reflected cultural, historical, and Indigenous influences. Many terms are region-specific and signal local identity:

- **Australian English examples:** *arvo* (afternoon), *bogan* (uncultured person), *ute* (utility vehicle), *thongs* (flip-flops).
- **New Zealand English examples:** *bach* (holiday home), *chilly bin* (cooler), *togs* (swimwear), *jandals* (flip-flops).
- **Indigenous borrowings:** NZE incorporates Māori words like *kai* (food), *whānau* (family), *haka* (ceremonial dance), whereas AusE includes Aboriginal words such as *billabong* (waterhole) and *kangaroo* (marsupial).

Lexical innovation often reflects local lifestyle and social norms. For example, NZE *bach* signals a holiday culture unique to coastal New Zealand, while AusE *arvo* reflects informal, relaxed speech patterns.

Sample sentences:

- AusE: “I’m going to mow the lawn this arvo.”
- NZE: “We’re heading to the bach for the weekend.”

3.3 Sociolinguistic Attitudes

Survey analysis indicated that speakers attach strong social meaning to their accent. Key findings include:



- **Perceived personality traits:** AusE speakers were described as “friendly,” “laid-back,” and “direct,” while NZE speakers were perceived as “soft-spoken,” “mellow,” and “sing-song.”
- **Identity signaling:** 85% of NZE respondents reported that using Māori words in casual conversation strengthened national identity, whereas only 40% of AusE respondents used Aboriginal English terms regularly.
- **Intergenerational differences:** Younger speakers in both countries displayed more exposure to other English varieties via media and social media, sometimes adopting loanwords or pronunciation features from international English without losing national accent markers.

Open-ended responses highlighted pride in national speech: one NZE participant noted, “You can always tell a Kiwi by the way they say *fish*,” while an AusE speaker stated, “Our slang shows we don’t take ourselves too seriously.”

These results indicate that while Australian and New Zealand English share a common colonial heritage, phonological, lexical, and sociolinguistic differences reinforce separate national identities. Vowel shifts in NZE, region-specific slang, and the integration of Indigenous terms are key distinguishing factors that are socially salient to speakers.

4. Discussion

The comparative analysis of Australian English (AusE) and New Zealand English (NZE) demonstrates that, despite their shared colonial origins, both varieties have developed distinctive linguistic identities shaped by phonological, lexical, and sociocultural factors.

4.1 Phonological Divergence

Phonological differences, particularly in vowel quality, emerged as the most salient distinguishing feature between the two varieties. The centralized KIT and raised DRESS vowels in NZE contrast with the broader diphthongs of AusE, giving each accent a distinctive auditory signature. These shifts align with prior research suggesting that vowel centralization in NZE may have originated from early settler dialect leveling combined with internal innovations (Gordon & Sudbury, 2002).

The subtle differences in TRAP and FACE vowels also reflect regional variation in speech communities and may be reinforced socially through peer-group interactions. These findings suggest that even small phonetic shifts can serve as strong markers of national identity, as evidenced by survey respondents’ ability to distinguish between AusE and NZE speakers based solely on vowel pronunciation.

4.2 Lexical Variation and Cultural Identity

Lexical differences reflect both historical settlement patterns and ongoing cultural interactions. AusE exhibits informal, playful slang (e.g., *arvo*, *bogan*), while NZE integrates Māori vocabulary



(e.g., *whānau*, *kai*), signaling a conscious acknowledgment of Indigenous heritage. This integration not only enriches NZE lexicon but also reinforces social cohesion and national identity, as participants reported that Māori terms are important markers of “Kiwi-ness.”

The use of Indigenous terms in AusE, although present, is less socially embedded, reflecting different historical and sociolinguistic trajectories. Lexical distinctions such as *bach* vs. *arvo* illustrate how everyday language can serve as a subtle but meaningful reflection of local culture, lifestyle, and values.

4.3 Sociolinguistic Implications

Sociolinguistic findings highlight the role of accent and word choice in identity construction. AusE speakers’ accents and slang convey informality and friendliness, while NZE’s vowel patterns and Māori borrowings signal national heritage and cohesion. Both communities demonstrate awareness of their linguistic distinctiveness and use it to navigate social relationships and signal belonging.

Generational differences further suggest that globalization and digital media exposure are influencing speech patterns. Younger speakers show greater receptivity to international English forms, but core national features remain robust. This interplay between global influences and local identity suggests that AusE and NZE will continue to evolve in ways that balance external pressures with internal social signaling.

4.4 Broader Linguistic Significance

The divergence of AusE and NZE exemplifies the dynamic processes of language change in postcolonial contexts. Geographic separation, social networks, and Indigenous language contact have created varieties that are both mutually intelligible and socially distinct. These findings support variationist sociolinguistic theory (Labov, 1994), illustrating how small phonetic and lexical differences can acquire substantial social meaning over time.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of considering both structural and social dimensions of language. Phonological shifts, lexical innovation, and sociolinguistic attitudes are intertwined, reflecting broader patterns of cultural identity, historical migration, and national consciousness.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Australian and New Zealand English demonstrate how closely related language varieties can develop distinctive identities through phonetic, lexical, and sociocultural divergence. Phonological shifts, region-specific slang, and Indigenous language integration serve as markers of national identity, while sociolinguistic attitudes reinforce these distinctions. The study highlights the dynamic interplay between historical settlement, social networks, and cultural



identity in shaping language, offering valuable insights into the evolution of English in postcolonial contexts.

Australian and New Zealand English exemplify how geographic and cultural divergence can yield distinct yet related national varieties of a global language. Their linguistic trajectories underscore the dynamic interplay between language, identity, and social history in postcolonial societies. Understanding their differences not only enriches comparative linguistics but also highlights the broader processes of language change and identity formation in the English-speaking world.

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Conceptualization and Metonymy: Cognitive Mechanisms of Meaning Construction in Language

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Abstract; This paper examines how conceptualization and metonymy jointly underpin meaning construction in language within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Conceptualization is treated as the dynamic, construal-based, and embodied process through which linguistic expressions prompt mental representations, while metonymy is argued to be a domain-internal access operation that provides cognitively economical routes to complex conceptual structures. Integrating insights from Cognitive Grammar, Frame Semantics, and Conceptual Integration Theory, the study shows how reference-point relations, frame activation, and local compressions in blended spaces account for familiar patterns such as AUTHOR→WORK (“She reads Shakespeare”) and PLACE→INSTITUTION (“The White House issued a statement”). The analysis highlights the roles of salience, profiling, and cultural models in stabilizing metonymic preferences across languages and registers, and it outlines operational diagnostics for distinguishing metonymy from metaphor in corpus data. We argue that metonymy is not a peripheral stylistic device but a fundamental cognitive mechanism embedded in embodied experience and socio-cultural practice. The paper concludes with implications for linguistic theory, cross-linguistic variation, corpus methodology, and applied domains including translation, lexicography, and natural language understanding.

Keywords: *conceptualization; metonymy; cognitive linguistics; embodied cognition*

1. Introduction

The study of meaning has long oscillated between two broad conceptions. In traditional structuralist and formalist accounts, meaning is treated as a relatively **static relation** between a sign and an extralinguistic referent, compositional and truth-conditional in spirit. On this view, linguistic expressions map onto the world in a largely code-like fashion, and figurative uses (including metonymy) are often relegated to stylistics or pragmatics. By contrast, **Cognitive**

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Linguistics (CL) reconceives meaning as conceptualization—a dynamic process in which language prompts comprehenders to construct rich mental representations constrained by attention, perspective, and embodied experience (Langacker, 1987, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). In CL, grammar itself is symbolic and usage-based; semantic structure is inseparable from encyclopedic knowledge, and discourse is saturated with culturally learned frames and scenarios (Fillmore, 1982). Within this framework, figurative phenomena are not peripheral ornaments but basic cognitive operations that reveal how speakers access, organize, and navigate conceptual structure.

While metaphor has attracted sustained attention as cross-domain mapping (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), metonymy—a within-domain access relation grounded in contiguity and salience—has emerged as equally fundamental to meaning construction (Radden & Kövecses, 1999; Kövecses, 2002). Metonymy enables speakers to reach a complex target concept by profiling a cognitively prominent reference point—as when *Shakespeare* denotes the writer’s works, or *the White House* profiles the U.S. executive. Far from being a mere stylistic shortcut, metonymy is pervasive in everyday reference, description, stance-taking, and institutional discourse; it underwrites headline economy, legal personification (“the bench ruled”), and the conceptual compression characteristic of expert genres. From a CL perspective, then, conceptualization provides the architecture, and metonymy provides efficient access within that architecture.

Despite broad consensus on this division of labor, several issues remain undertheorized or methodologically diffuse. First, we lack a precise account of how metonymy functions mechanistically as an access operation inside ongoing conceptualization—how salience, profiling, and attentional selection interact in time. Second, although influential frameworks—Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 1982), Reference-Point Constructions (Langacker, 1993), and Conceptual Integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002)—offer complementary tools, their constraints on metonymic mappings have not been systematically aligned. Third, cross-linguistic research shows that metonymic preferences vary with cultural models and discourse traditions (Kövecses, 2005), yet we lack comparable diagnostics that travel across languages and registers. Finally, annotation and corpus practice still struggle to differentiate metonymy from metaphor in ambiguous cases (“metaphonymy”), and to do so in a way that supports reproducible analysis.

Against this background, the present paper advances a unified, operational view of metonymy as a cognitive access mechanism embedded in conceptualization. We pursue four guiding research questions:

- **RQ1 (Access):** *In what precise ways does metonymy function as a cognitive access operation within conceptualization?* We model metonymy as reference-point-guided profiling inside a single frame/domain, yielding conceptual economy and discourse coherence (Langacker, 1993; Radden & Kövecses, 1999).



- **RQ2 (Constraints):** *How do frames, reference points, and embodiment constrain metonymic mappings?* We articulate constraint sets from Frame Semantics (slot/role structure), Reference-Point dynamics (salience, proximity, conventionality), and embodied routines that stabilize recurrent contiguities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Fillmore, 1982).
- **RQ3 (Variation):** *What cross-linguistic/cultural factors modulate metonymic preferences?* We examine how cultural cognition and discourse conventions select different reference points (e.g., PLACE→INSTITUTION vs. LEADER→STATE), and how genre/register (legal, journalistic, literary) redistributes metonymic load (Kövecses, 2005; Radden, 2005).
- **RQ4 (Diagnostics):** *How can we operationalize diagnostics for identifying metonymy vs. metaphor in real data?* We propose a compact test battery—paraphrase expansion, frame-fit checks, anaphora and agreement behavior, collocational profiles, and syntactic alternations—to support annotation and corpus studies, and to distinguish within-domain access from cross-domain mapping.

Outline. Section 2 reviews the theoretical background: conceptualization as dynamic, construal-based, and embodied (Langacker, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999); metonymy as within-domain access (Radden & Kövecses, 1999); and three anchors—Frame Semantics, Reference-Point Constructions, and Conceptual Integration. Section 3 proposes a working typology of metonymy (e.g., PART→WHOLE, PLACE→INSTITUTION, PRODUCER→PRODUCT, OBJECT→CONTENT, BODY-PART→STATE/AGENT) with minimal diagnostics and cross-linguistic illustrations. Section 4 develops our account of metonymy as access inside conceptualization, detailing salience, profiling, and economy, and formalizing reference-point dynamics. Section 5 aligns constraints from frames, reference points, and blending, clarifying when metonymic compressions participate in integration networks. Section 6 surveys cross-linguistic and cultural variation, relating metonymic preferences to cultural models and register. Section 7 sets out a methodological program: corpus diagnostics, optional experimental probes, and an annotation scheme. Section 8 offers case studies from legal, media/literary, and conversational discourse. Section 9 discusses theoretical payoffs and borderline phenomena (metaphonymy); Section 10 sketches implications for lexicography, NLP, translation, and pedagogy; Section 11 notes limitations and avenues for future work; and Section 12 concludes that conceptualization (architecture) and metonymy (navigation) jointly ground the flexibility, efficiency, and cultural patterning of linguistic meaning.

Throughout, we treat metonymy not as a decorative trope but as a core cognitive resource—one that reveals, with particular clarity, how language users build, access, and manage conceptual structure in real time.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Conceptualization in Cognitive Linguistics



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Within Cognitive Linguistics (CL), meaning is not housed in words per se but constructed by language users as they recruit rich conceptual knowledge to interpret an expression in context (Evans & Green, 2006; Croft & Cruse, 2004). In Langacker's terms, a linguistic form prompts a conceptualization rather than encoding a ready-made proposition (Langacker, 1987, 1993). Four interlocking notions are central:

- **Construal.** A situation can be conceptualized in multiple, systematically related ways. Lexico-grammatical choices modulate scope, granularity, and vantage point (e.g., *a flock of birds* vs. *thirty starlings*), yielding distinct but compatible portrayals (Langacker, 1987; Evans & Green, 2006).
- **Perspective.** Linguistic expressions impose a viewing arrangement: the conceptualizer's position (e.g., deictic center, temporal vantage), attentional window, and trajectory–landmark relations (Langacker, 1987). Passive/active alternations or motion verbs with path vs. manner salience instantiate perspectival shifts.
- **Profiling and figure/ground.** A lexical item profiles a substructure within a base (encyclopedic frame). In *elbow*, the joint is profiled against the arm schema; in an event description, a figure (trajectory) is set against a ground (landmark), shaping attentional salience (Langacker, 1987, 1993).
- **Embodiment.** Conceptualization is constrained by bodily and sensorimotor experience. Image schemas (e.g., CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE) arise from recurrent bodily interactions and structure both literal and nonliteral understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Johnson, 1987).

Beyond embodiment, conceptualization is culturally patterned. Languages package recurring experiences into community-specific cultural models that attune speakers to preferred construals and figurative routines (Kövecses, 2005). Thus, CL treats semantic structure as encyclopedic, usage-based, and variationally sensitive across communities and registers (Croft & Cruse, 2004; Evans & Green, 2006).

2.2. What Metonymy Is (and Isn't)

In the cognitive paradigm, metonymy is a domain-internal mapping in which one concept affords mental access to another conceptually contiguous entity within the same frame/domain (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). It exploits entrenched associations (producer–product, part–whole, place–institution) to navigate conceptual structure efficiently:

- **Access via contiguity/association.** In *She reads Shakespeare*, the AUTHOR provides access to the WORKS; in *The White House issued a statement*, a PLACE profiles an INSTITUTION. Such relations are licensed by conventional contiguity inside knowledge frames (Radden & Kövecses, 1999; Kövecses, 2002).



- Contrast with metaphor. Metaphor maps across domains (e.g., ARGUMENT IS WAR), projecting structure from a source to a target (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metonymy, by contrast, stays within a single domain/frame and re-profiles an element already internal to that frame. Mixed cases (“metaphtonymy”) arise when metonymic highlighting scaffolds a subsequent cross-domain projection (Kövecses, 2002).
- Processing intuition: economy, salience, entrenchment. Metonymy achieves cognitive economy by recruiting the most salient reference point available, leveraging entrenched associations to compress description, advance reference, and maintain discourse coherence (Radden & Kövecses, 1999; Langacker, 1993). In headlines and legal prose (*The bench ruled...*), metonymy supports conceptual compression while preserving recoverability.

A working typology (illustrative, not exhaustive) includes PART→WHOLE (*hands* for workers), WHOLE→PART (*the university* for an office), PLACE→INSTITUTION (*Hollywood*), PRODUCER→PRODUCT (*to own a Picasso*), OBJECT→CONTENT (*drink a glass*), BODY-PART→STATE/AGENT (*keep a cool head*). Each type can be diagnosed by paraphrase expansion and frame-fit tests (Section 7).

2.3. Three Anchors

CL offers complementary frameworks that specify how metonymy operates inside conceptualization. We foreground three “anchors” and the constraints they contribute.

(i) Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 1982).

Lexical meaning invokes frames—schematized situations with participants, roles, and relations (e.g., COMMERCIAL_TRANSACTION: buyer, seller, goods, money). Metonymy functions as frame-internal activation: highlighting one frame element to stand for (and provide access to) the frame or another element. Thus, *the bench* (ROLE: judicial body) can profile the institutional agent in the LEGAL frame. Constraints: (a) the source and target must belong to the same frame, (b) the relation must be conventional and inferentially licensed by the frame, and (c) the metonymic shift should preserve role compatibility to sustain coherence.

(ii) Reference-Point Constructions (Langacker, 1993).

Metonymy is modeled as reference-point-guided profiling: a salient, cognitively accessible entity (the reference point) affords mental access to a less accessible target within a network. Canonical patterns include AUTHOR→WORK, PLACE→INSTITUTION, and POSSESSOR→POSSESSED (*John's keys*). Constraints: (a) salience/proximity (the reference point must be highly entrenched and contiguous to the target in the knowledge network), (b) conventional pathways (community-stored links), and (c) asymmetric accessibility (the reference point is more accessible than the target at the moment of use). This account explains why



Shakespeare readily stands for the plays, but a *Renaissance playwright* does not as easily stand for a specific corpus without further specification.

(iii) Conceptual Integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Meaning often arises in blended spaces where structure from multiple input spaces integrates under compression principles (time, cause–effect, role, identity). Metonymy participates as a local compression: an internally licensed shortcut that carries into the blend to support tighter emergent structure (e.g., slogan and headline stylization). Constraints: (a) metonymic access should be licensed in at least one input by frame-internal relations, (b) compression must increase topical coherence without losing recoverability, and (c) the blend should permit back-projection to inputs for interpretation. This clarifies why highly compressed institutional personifications work in headlines but require expansion in formal statutes.

Together, these anchors yield a layered constraint model: frames delimit the domain and role inventory; reference-point dynamics determine which element is cognitively optimal for access at a given discourse moment; and integration explains how local metonymic compressions scale up in complex, multi-input constructions (Fillmore, 1982; Langacker, 1993; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

3. A Working Typology of Metonymy

Below, each subtype is defined as a within-frame access relation (Radden & Kövecses, 1999), followed by a minimal diagnostic (quick tests you can run in corpus work) and 2–3 examples (English + one other language). Where helpful, I note role compatibility (Frame Semantics) and reference-point status (Langacker, 1993).

3.1 PART → WHOLE / WHOLE → PART

Definition. A salient part (or member) provides access to the whole entity (or set), or vice versa, within the same frame (e.g., BODY, ORGANIZATION).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Paraphrase expansion: “part” ↔ “the person/whole” without changing the frame: *three hands* ≈ *three workers*.
- Anaphora/Agreement: follow-up pronouns reveal intended number/type (*Three hands are needed; they start at 7 a.m.* → they = workers).
- Reversibility: WHOLE→PART often not reversible (*The company signed* ≠ *the managers signed* unless context licenses it).

Examples.



- EN: *We need all hands on deck* (PART→WHOLE: hands for workers/personnel).
- EN: *The university announced new grants* (WHOLE→PART: university for administration/decision-makers).
- ES: *Faltan manos en la cocina* “We’re short of hands in the kitchen.” (PART→WHOLE: manos for staff).
- FR: *L’Élysée a confirmé la visite* “The Élysée confirmed the visit” (WHOLE/PLACE→PART/INSTITUTION; see §3.2).

3.2 PLACE → INSTITUTION / BUILDING → PEOPLE

Definition. A location/building serves as reference point for the institution/people housed there (LEGAL, GOVERNMENT, MEDIA frames).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Role compatibility: Does the PLACE fill the Agent role plausibly? If yes, metonymy licenses institutional Agent.
- Frame-fit check: Replace PLACE with explicit institution/officials; acceptability preserved in news prose.
- Anaphora: *The White House said... it...* (institutional singular).

Examples.

- EN: *The White House issued a statement.* (BUILDING→PEOPLE/INSTITUTION)
- EN (legal): *The bench ruled against the motion.* (PLACE/SEAT→JUDGES)
- DE: *Das Kanzleramt dementierte den Bericht.* “The Chancellery denied the report.” (BUILDING→INSTITUTION)

3.3 PRODUCER → PRODUCT

Definition. A producer/author/brand profiles the work/product (AUTHOR→WORK, MAKER→ARTEFACT).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Paraphrase: *read Shakespeare* ≈ *read Shakespeare’s works*.
- Selectional fit: Verbs select for works, but the author name appears: *read, buy, listen to*.
- Anaphora: *She bought a Picasso. It hangs in the foyer* (object, not person).

Examples.



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- EN: *She reads Shakespeare every summer.* (AUTHOR→WORK)
- EN: *They served a Burgundy with dinner.* (REGION/PRODUCER→PRODUCT wine)
- ES: *Voy a escuchar a Piazzolla esta noche.* “I’m going to listen to Piazzolla tonight.” (AUTHOR→WORK/recordings)

3.4 INSTRUMENT → ACTION / OBJECT → CONTENT

Definition. An instrument provides access to the action regularly performed with it; a container profiles its contents (INGESTION, READING, COMMUNICATION frames).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Paraphrase: *She skyped me* \approx *She called me via Skype* (INSTRUMENT→ACTION).
- Frame-fit: *drink a glass* \approx *drink the contents of the glass.*
- Agreement: content-compatible anaphora: *He finished a bottle; it was a Rioja.*

Examples.

- EN: *He mic’d the speaker.* (INSTRUMENT→ACTION, productive verbing)
- EN: *She drank a glass and left.* (OBJECT→CONTENT)
- TR: *Bir fincan daha ister misin?* “Do you want another cup?” (OBJECT→CONTENT: coffee/tea understood)

3.5 BODY PART → STATE / AGENT

Definition. A body part profiles a person or mental/affective state saliently associated with it (BODY, AGENCY, EMOTION frames).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Paraphrase: *We need more heads* \approx *We need more people/staff.*
- Entailments: idiomatic collocations preserve state readout (*keep a cool head* → self-control).
- Anaphora: Number/type switch to persons: *Two pairs of hands joined; they helped immediately.*

Examples.

- EN: *They’re short two heads in accounting.* (PART→WHOLE person count)
- EN: *Keep a cool head and carry on.* (BODY PART→STATE)



- RU: *Нам не хватает рук*. “We don’t have enough hands.” (PART→WHOLE: workers/staff)

Table 1. Typology, Diagnostics, and Examples (schematic)

Type	Definition (within-frame)	Minimal Diagnostic	EN Example	Other-Language Example
PART→WHOLE	Part profiles the whole	Paraphrase; anaphora to people	<i>All hands on deck</i>	ES <i>faltan manos</i>
WHOLE→PART	Whole profiles sub-part	Role-fit; reversibility weak	<i>The university announced...</i>	FR <i>L'Élysée a confirmé...</i>
PLACE→INSTITUTION	Building/place → institution/people	Agent role; frame-fit	<i>The White House said...</i>	DE <i>Das Kanzleramt dementierte...</i>
PRODUCER→PRODUCT	Producer/author → work/product	Verb selection; object anaphora	<i>Read Shakespeare</i>	ES <i>escuchar a Piazzolla</i>
INSTRUMENT→ACTION	Tool names action	Paraphrase to action	<i>He mic'd the speaker</i>	—
OBJECT→CONTENT	Container → contents	Paraphrase; content anaphora	<i>Drink a glass</i>	TR <i>Bir fincan daha...</i>
BODY PART→STATE/AGENT	Body part → person/state	Collocation; anaphora to people	<i>count heads; cool head</i>	RU <i>не хватает рук</i>
EVENT→TIME	Event → period/era	Paraphrase; recoverability	<i>Since 9/11</i>	ES <i>Tras el 15-M</i>
TIME→EVENT	Time/date → event	Community indexicality	<i>On Feb 24</i>	—

3.6 EVENT → TIME / TIME → EVENT

Definition. A historical event provides access to the period, or a date/time profiles the event (HISTORY, MEDIA frames).

Minimal diagnostic.

- Paraphrase: *After 9/11 ≈ After the September 11 attacks* (EVENT→TIME-PERIOD).
- Recoverability: Time/date uniquely retrieves the event in discourse community.
- Anaphora: time vs. event pronouns (*After 9/11, it changed everything* → it = the event).

Examples.

- EN: *Since 9/11, airport security has tightened.* (EVENT→ERA)
- EN: *On February 24, everything shifted.* (TIME→EVENT: 2022 invasion context)
- ES: *Tras el 15-M, surgieron nuevos partidos.* “After 15-M (May 15 movement), new parties emerged.” (EVENT label → period)

4. Metonymy as an Access Mechanism in Conceptualization

4.1 Salience, Profiling, and Economy



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Metonymy delivers cognitive economy by letting speakers profile the most accessible substructure of a frame to stand for the target (Langacker, 1993). Three benefits follow:

1. Selectional efficiency: The metonymic reference point satisfies grammatical/semantic selection while compressing content (*The bench ruled...* efficiently encodes “the panel of judges issued a decision”).
2. Discourse coherence: Recurrent reference points stabilize topic continuity (news cycles reuse the White House, Downing Street, Brussels).
3. Inferential guidance: Listeners reconstruct the full frame via entrenched associations, minimizing ambiguity where communities share the frame (Fillmore, 1982).

Result: fewer words, higher cohesion, and predictable inferences—hallmarks of efficient conceptual navigation.

4.2 Reference-Point Dynamics

In Langacker’s model, a salient pivot (reference point) affords mental access to a target within a knowledge network. Two canonical cases:

- AUTHOR → WORK. *Shakespeare* (highly salient author node) → *the dramatic/poetic corpus* (target). Why it works: (i) stable producer–product association, (ii) community conventionalization, (iii) asymmetric accessibility (the name is more retrievable than a list of titles).
 - Discourse payoffs: thematic cohesion (*Early Shakespeare shows...*), evaluative stance (*late Shakespeare*).
- PLACE → TEAM/GOVERNMENT. *Downing Street, the Kremlin, Ankara* → institutional agents. Why it works: (i) seat-of-power schemas in the GOVERNANCE frame; (ii) spatial contiguity cues agency; (iii) journalistic convention licenses Agent role for PLACE.
 - Diagnostics: frame-fit (replace with *the government/PM*); agentive verb compatibility; singular institutional anaphora (*it*).

Operational cues for annotation.

- Salience/entrenchment: frequency and conventionality in domain corpora.
- Proximity: tight source–target linkage in the same frame (no cross-domain bridging).
- Asymmetry: source more retrievable than target at that discourse moment (topic, givenness).

4.3 Embodiment Constraints



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Embodied routines shape stable contiguities that metonymy exploits (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Johnson, 1987):

- Body-based aggregations: manual labor → hands; cognition/self-regulation → head; perception → eyes.
- Artefact–use couplings: cup → beverage, bottle → wine—ingestion schemas ground OBJECT→CONTENT.
- Place–agency schemas: occupants recurrently occupy buildings associated with authority (courtrooms, palaces), yielding PLACE→INSTITUTION mappings.

These bodily and situated regularities provide experiential evidence that stabilizes metonymic preferences across communities; culture then amplifies or redirects them (Kövecses, 2005).

5. Interfacing Frameworks

5.1 Frame Semantics

Frame Semantics treats lexical meanings as pointers to frames—structured scenes with slots (roles) and prototypical fillers (Fillmore, 1982). On this view, metonymy is frame-internal activation: a speaker highlights one element to grant mental access to the larger frame or to another element within the same frame. Thus, in the LEGAL frame, *the bench* fills a ROLE (judicial body) yet functions referentially as an Agent, activating the full adjudicative scene. Operationally, this predicts: (i) role compatibility—the metonymic SOURCE must plausibly stand in for a role licensed by the frame; (ii) recoverability—listeners can reconstruct the frame and the intended TARGET; and (iii) conventionalization—community practices entrain which slot–filler shortcuts are stable (e.g., *Downing Street, the Kremlin, Wall Street*). Frame diagnostics therefore double as metonymy diagnostics: frame-fit checks and role substitution tests (Section 7.1).

5.2 Cognitive Grammar

In Cognitive Grammar, expressions profile a substructure against an encyclopedic base; meaning differences reflect differences in construal (Langacker, 1987, 1993). Metonymy appears as conceptual prominence: the speaker re-profiles a readily accessible substructure (the reference point) to stand for a less accessible target within the same knowledge network (AUTHOR→WORK; PLACE→INSTITUTION). Three consequences follow. First, asymmetric accessibility: reference points tend to be more salient (names, seats of power, iconic parts). Second, economy: re-profiling compresses description while preserving interpretability. Third, discourse coherence: once a reference point is introduced, it supports topic continuity via anaphora and collocational routines (e.g., *the White House... it... its...*). Cognitive Grammar thus explains how metonymy works (via profiling and reference-point access) and why it is efficient (salience-driven selection in real time).



5.3 Conceptual Integration

Conceptual Integration Theory models meaning construction as online blending of multiple inputs under compression principles (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). Metonymy contributes as a local compression imported from an input where the frame-internal shortcut is licensed (e.g., PLACE→INSTITUTION in political reporting) and projected into the blend (e.g., a headline, slogan, or chant). This predicts distributional facts: metonymies are especially prevalent in registers that reward brevity, rhythmic patterning, and iconicity (headlines, tickers, slogans). Blending additionally clarifies mixed cases (“metaphtonymy”): a metonymic highlight (e.g., *Washington*) scaffolds a subsequent cross-domain metaphor (e.g., *Washington turned up the heat*), with metonymy handling reference and metaphor handling structure.

6. Cross-Linguistic and Cultural Variation

Cultural models guide preferred metonymies. In political discourse, some languages/media traditions favor COUNTRY→GOVERNMENT (*Berlin announced...*), others LEADER→STATE (*Ankara decided...*; LEADER as the reference point), reflecting local ideologies of agency and leadership (Kövecses, 2005). Such preferences are reinforced by journalistic stylebooks, audience expectations, and institutional naming practices.

Body-part metonymies reveal cultural salience. As Radden (2005) shows, European languages differ in which body parts profile people or states: EN *hands* (labor), RU *pyku* (labor), EN *heads* (headcount/authority), DE *Kopf* in idioms (judgment), with distinct collocational ecosystems (e.g., *cool head*, *clear head* vs. *steady hand*). These distributions map culturally entrenched embodied routines (Section 4.3).

Register matters.

- Journalistic prose maximizes PLACE→INSTITUTION and COUNTRY→GOVERNMENT for speed and cohesion.
- Legal genres prefer BUILDING/ROLE→INSTITUTION/PEOPLE (*the bench*, *the court*, *the prosecution*), aligning with role precision and institutional personification.
- Literary text amplifies PRODUCER→PRODUCT and BODY PART→STATE for stylistic texture and focalization.



Table 2. Cross-linguistic snapshot

Language	PLACE→INSTITUTION	COUNTRY→GOVT	LEADER→STATE	PRODUCER→PRODUCT	BODY PART→STATE/AGENT
English	The White House said...	Washington will...	<i>Biden</i> vowed... (rarer as STATE)	read <i>Shakespeare</i>	count <i>heads</i> ; cool <i>head</i>
German	Das Kanzleramt dementierte...	Berlin beschloss...	Scholz entschied... (commentary)	ein <i>Kafka</i> lesen	klare <i>Kopf</i> (idioms)
Spanish	La Moncloa anunció...	Madrid aprobó...	Sánchez anunció... (frequent)	escuchar a <i>Piazzolla</i>	faltan <i>manos</i>
Russian	Кремль заявил...	Москва решила...	Путин заявил... (salient)	читать <i>Пушкина</i>	не хватает <i>рук</i>
Turkish	Beştepe duyurdu...	Ankara açıkladı...	Erdogan söyledi... (common)	<i>Orhan Pamuk</i> 'u okumak	iki <i>el</i> daha lazım

Note. Cells reflect common press/literary patterns; actual distributions vary by outlet and subregister.

7. Methodological Program

7.1 Corpus Diagnostics

To distinguish metonymy (within-frame access) from metaphor (cross-domain mapping) in authentic data, we propose a compact battery:

1. Paraphrase expansion (recoverability). Replace the suspected SOURCE with the explicit TARGET (*the bench* → *the panel of judges*). If meaning and entailments hold, metonymy is supported.
2. Frame-fit check (role licensing). Verify that both SOURCE and TARGET are members of the same frame and that the SOURCE can plausibly fill the discourse role (Agent, Experiencer).
3. Anaphora resolution. Track follow-up pronouns and definites (*it/they, this decision, the institution*). Institutional singulars (*it*) often mark PLACE→INSTITUTION.
4. Collocational profiles. Examine verb–noun and adjective–noun patterns. Institutional agents pair with speech and decision verbs (*announced, ruled, confirmed*).
5. Syntactic alternations. Passive/active alternations or light-verb constructions can reveal the underlying role structure (*The bill was passed by Westminster* vs. *Parliament passed the bill*).
6. Community indexicality. Event/time labels and place names rely on shared indexical frames (e.g., *9/11, 15-M*). If indexical recoverability is high, metonymy is likely.

Corpora to sample.

- Newswire: Gigaword, NOW (News on the Web).



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- Parliamentary debates: Hansard, Bundestag stenographic reports.
- Legal decisions: Supreme Court opinions, EU Court of Justice.
- Literature subcorpora: Project Gutenberg subsets; national literary corpora.
- Comparable multilingual news corpora for cross-linguistic contrasts.

7.2 Experimental Probes (optional)

To validate corpus diagnostics with processing evidence:

- Reference-point priming. Prime participants with the SOURCE (*White House*) and measure reaction times to TARGET-consistent continuations vs. mismatches (expect facilitation for frame-consistent targets).
- Eye-tracking for headlines. Headlines with PLACE→INSTITUTION should yield shorter regressions when followed by institutional continuations than by literal place continuations.
- Acceptability judgments. Compare metonymic sentences with literal paraphrases across registers; metonymy should show higher naturalness in headline/legal styles.
- Memory probes. Test whether readers recall institutional agents after PLACE primes more accurately than literal place content.

7.3 Annotation Scheme

A lightweight schema to support reproducible analysis and inter-annotator agreement:

- SOURCE (string; e.g., *the White House*).
- TARGET (normalized label; e.g., *U.S. executive/officials*).
- FRAME (e.g., GOVERNANCE, LEGAL, LITERARY PRODUCTION).
- TYPE (e.g., PLACE→INSTITUTION; PRODUCER→PRODUCT; BODY PART→STATE).
- EVIDENCE (diagnostics used: paraphrase, frame-fit, anaphora, collocation, syntax).
- REGISTER (news, legal, literary, conversational).
- CONFIDENCE (Likert 1–5).
- NOTES (free text for edge cases; mark metaphonymy if metaphor interacts).

Inter-annotator agreement protocol.



- Train annotators on a seed set with gold analyses; discuss borderline cases (e.g., *Washington turned up the heat*).
- Compute Cohen's κ or Krippendorff's α on SOURCE/TYPE labels and FRAME assignment; target $\geq .75$.
- Adjudicate disagreements with diagnostic audit trails (store the paraphrases and frame-fit steps).
- Release an annotator's manual with decision trees (e.g., "If role licensing fails, consider metaphor or literal reading").

8. Discussion

This paper has argued that conceptualization supplies the *architecture* of meaning—an encyclopedic, frame-saturated, and embodied knowledge space in which linguistic forms prompt specific construals—while metonymy provides the *navigation tools* within that architecture, affording cognitively economical access to targets via salient reference points. The division of labour is therefore complementary: conceptualization furnishes the scene, role inventory, and attentional parameters; metonymy selects and profiles the most accessible node to keep discourse fluent, cohesive, and recoverable. Put differently, conceptualization answers *what structure is potentially in play*; metonymy answers *which doorway we use to enter it*.

This synthesis clarifies why metonymy is ubiquitous in high-pressure communicative environments (headlines, tickers, legal rulings, play-by-play commentary), where compression is rewarded and community knowledge can be presupposed. It also explains the stability of "institutional personifications" (e.g., *the bench ruled*; *the White House announced*): once entrenched, these shortcuts become default entry points to complex frames. In narrative discourse, producer→product and body-part→agent/state mappings serve analogous functions—offering quick access to evaluative stance (*early Shakespeare*), participation structure (*count heads*), or affective regulation (*keep a cool head*) without re-describing the entire frame on each mention.

Metonymy, metaphor, and the edge cases

Difficult cases often involve layering, where metonymy and metaphor co-occur or interact—frequently labelled metaphonymy. Three recurrent configurations help disambiguate:

1. Metonymy scaffolds metaphor. A metonymic reference point secures reference (*Washington* for the U.S. government), upon which a metaphor imposes structure (*turned up the heat* → INTENSITY-AS-TEMPERATURE). Here, diagnostics show *within-frame* licensing for *Washington* (PLACE→INSTITUTION), followed by a cross-domain mapping for the predicate.



2. Metaphor licenses metonymy. A metaphor establishes a domain shift (*MARKET IS A CREATURE*), after which metonymy exploits within-blend contiguities (*the market's nerves* → PART→WHOLE inside the creature-blend). Distinguishing marks: metaphor is global (reorganizes the event geometry); metonymy is local (access within the newly constituted frame).
3. Ambiguity resolved by role-fit and paraphrase. If a candidate source cannot plausibly fill a frame role for the same domain (*the corridor decided*), the reading is either metaphoric or infelicitous. Role-compatibility and paraphrase expansion remain the most reliable field diagnostics.

In practice, analysts should chart the order of operations (reference secured first vs. structure imposed first) and test recoverability via literal paraphrases. A methodologically conservative stance treats metonymy as the minimal hypothesis when *within-frame* access suffices, invoking metaphor only when cross-domain projection is required to satisfy selection or inference.

Processing and acquisition: predictions

A unified account yields testable predictions for processing and learning:

- Frequency and conventionality. Because metonymies piggyback on entrenched frame contiguities, higher token frequency and collocational stability should correlate with faster recognition and lower processing cost (shorter reading times, fewer regressions). Conversely, novel or community-specific metonymies should incur accommodation costs unless strongly cued by context.
- Reference-point priming. Prior exposure to a reference point (e.g., *the Kremlin*) should facilitate uptake of institutional predicates (announce, deny, sanction) and penalize literal continuations (architectural descriptions). This predicts classic priming asymmetries in RT and EEG (e.g., reduced N400 for frame-consistent continuations).
- Acquisition trajectory. Children and L2 learners should first master high-contiguity, high-visibility patterns (OBJECT→CONTENT, BODY-PART→AGENT) before more abstract institutional personifications (PLACE→INSTITUTION). Early overextensions (e.g., treating any building as an institutional agent) should regress as role-fit constraints are learned.
- Register sensitivity. With exposure, learners will map register-specific metonymies (journalistic PLACE→INSTITUTION; legal ROLE→INSTITUTION) and display style-conditional expectations—a headline bias towards compressed institutional agents versus a statutory bias toward explicit institutional names.



- Bilingual modulation. In multilinguals, metonymic defaults track the cultural models and stylebooks of the language of discourse; switching languages should shift reference-point availability and naturalness judgments, mirroring cross-linguistic corpus distributions.

Collectively, these predictions align with a view of metonymy as an experience-tuned access mechanism: frequency shapes entrenchment, conventionality shapes expectations, and both jointly reduce the computational burden of real-time interpretation.

9. Conclusion

We have argued that conceptualization and metonymy are interdependent pillars of meaning construction. Conceptualization structures experience by supplying frame-based, embodied, and culturally patterned architectures; metonymy provides cognitively economical access within those architectures, selecting salient reference points to navigate complex scenes with minimal linguistic overhead. This joint mechanism explains the pervasiveness and stability of patterns such as PLACE→INSTITUTION, PRODUCER→PRODUCT, and BODY-PART→STATE/AGENT across languages and registers, while also clarifying their sensitivity to cultural models and genre conventions.

Methodologically, treating metonymy as within-frame access yields practical diagnostics (paraphrase expansion, role-fit, anaphora, collocation, and syntactic alternations) and cleanly separates it from metaphor (cross-domain structure). The framework generates processing and acquisition predictions—chiefly that frequency and conventionality entrain faster uptake and that learners internalize high-contiguity mappings first. For applied domains—translation, lexicography, NLP, and pedagogy—the payoff is immediate: preserve or model reference-point dynamics to maintain coherence and interpretability.

In sum, meaning in natural language is flexible, embodied, and culturally patterned not despite metonymy but because of it. Conceptualization lays out the map; metonymy supplies the well-worn paths that let speakers and listeners move through it swiftly, accurately, and—when needed—creatively.

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The Impact of Creative Writing Activities in English Lessons on Students' Critical Thinking Skills

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of creative writing activities on the development of critical thinking skills among high school students in English lessons. A total of 100 participants were involved, with 50 students engaging in creative writing practices—such as story composition, poetry analysis, and reflective journaling—while the remaining 50 followed a traditional English curriculum. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests measuring critical thinking skills, complemented by qualitative evidence from student journals, interviews, and classroom observations. The results revealed a substantial improvement in the experimental group, which demonstrated a 25% increase in critical thinking scores, compared with a modest 5% increase in the control group. Qualitative findings further indicated that creative writing strengthened students' ability to consider alternative viewpoints, solve complex problems, and reflect on their thinking processes. Students also reported greater confidence in expressing ideas and a deeper awareness of the rationale behind their decisions. Overall, the study suggests that creative writing serves as an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing critical thinking and cognitive development. It highlights the broader educational value of creative writing beyond the English classroom and proposes directions for future research on its long-term impact.

Keywords: *creative writing, critical thinking, education, problem-solving, reflective journaling, English lessons.*

Introduction

Critical thinking—commonly defined as the ability to think independently, analytically, and reflectively—is widely acknowledged as a fundamental skill for academic achievement and lifelong learning (Facione, 2015). It encompasses the capacity to examine information critically,

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evaluate arguments, synthesize ideas, and generate well-reasoned judgments. As modern societies increasingly demand individuals who can navigate vast amounts of information and solve complex problems, educational systems worldwide have prioritized the integration of critical thinking skills into their curricula.

English education provides a particularly rich environment for cultivating critical thinking. Beyond acquiring linguistic competence, students are expected to interpret texts thoughtfully, analyze themes, and communicate ideas clearly and persuasively. While traditional English lessons—centered on grammar, reading comprehension, and literary analysis—contribute significantly to language development (Javid, 2023), they may not fully address the cognitive demands required for higher-order thinking. Consequently, educators are exploring more creative and interactive methods to enhance students' analytical abilities.

Creative writing has gained considerable attention as one such method. Activities such as storytelling, narrative design, and poetry writing allow students to engage deeply with complex ideas, experiment with language, and express personal and social perspectives (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Through these tasks, learners are encouraged to question assumptions, explore alternative interpretations, and examine human experiences from multiple angles.

Existing research suggests that creative writing can play a significant role in fostering critical thinking (Sternberg, 1999). The cognitive processes involved in crafting narratives—structuring ideas logically, developing coherent plots, and shaping characters with multidimensional motivations—mirror the analytical skills required in academic argumentation and problem-solving. Thus, incorporating creative writing into English lessons has the potential to strengthen students' ability to think critically, reason effectively, and approach learning with greater independence.

Creative writing also provides a supportive environment in which students can experiment with ideas and explore alternative viewpoints without the pressure of producing conventional or error-free responses (Kress, 1994). This freedom promotes cognitive flexibility—an essential dimension of critical thinking that involves approaching problems from multiple angles and evaluating a range of possible solutions (Perkins & Salomon, 1989). Through crafting narratives, students not only exercise their imagination but also practice essential cognitive skills such as problem-solving, analyzing cause-and-effect relationships, and making reasoned decisions in complex situations. These mental operations are directly transferable to critical thinking demands encountered both in academic contexts and in real-world scenarios (Babayev, 2022).

Although the educational value of creative writing has been recognized in existing literature, empirical investigations specifically addressing its impact on critical thinking remain relatively scarce. The limited number of studies available suggests that creative writing contributes to the development of critical thinking by encouraging self-reflection, strengthening problem-solving



abilities, and enabling learners to articulate and defend their ideas more effectively (Harris, 2010; Wallace & Williams, 2008). Nevertheless, further research is necessary to determine the extent to which creative writing can enhance critical thinking across diverse student populations, educational levels, and instructional settings.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of creative writing activities in English lessons on high school students' critical thinking skills (Babayev, 2023). By examining how narrative construction, storytelling, and other creative writing practices contribute to students' abilities to analyze texts, evaluate arguments, and generate original solutions, the study aims to provide empirical evidence supporting the pedagogical value of creative writing as a tool for fostering critical thinking.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to evaluate the impact of creative writing activities on students' critical thinking skills within the context of high school English lessons (Alisoy, 2024). Combining quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a comprehensive examination of both measurable learning outcomes and the subjective experiences of students. The research was carried out in a high school setting with a total of 100 students enrolled in two 11th-grade English classes. One class—the experimental group—engaged in structured creative writing activities, while the comparison class followed a traditional English curriculum.

Participants Section

The study involved 100 high school students from two 11th-grade English classes in an urban public school. The experimental group comprised 50 students who participated in weekly creative writing tasks, whereas the control group included 50 students who received conventional instruction focusing on grammar, literary analysis, and essay writing, without any creative writing component. Both groups were matched on their previous English academic performance to ensure that differences observed in post-intervention outcomes could reasonably be attributed to the creative writing activities rather than pre-existing disparities in ability.

The sample was intentionally selected to reflect demographic diversity in gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The experimental group included 25 males and 25 females, with a similar gender balance maintained in the control group. Ethnic representation mirrored that of the school's broader population, consisting of Hispanic students (40%), African American students (30%), Caucasian students (20%), and students from other ethnic backgrounds (10%). Levels of parental involvement varied across participants, with some reporting strong familial support for academic work, while others indicated limited engagement from their parents or guardians.

Creative Writing Activities



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The creative writing activities implemented in the experimental group were intentionally designed to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective engagement. Four main types of activities were introduced throughout the study:

1. Story Creation

Students composed short stories in response to thematic prompts such as *personal identity*, *conflict resolution*, and *ethical decision-making*. Each assignment required students to construct multidimensional characters, design coherent plots, and consider diverse perspectives when shaping narrative events. These tasks encouraged learners to evaluate complex situations, reflect on motivations, and justify narrative decisions.

2. Poetry Analysis and Creation

Students examined poems from various literary traditions and subsequently created original poems using techniques such as metaphor, symbolism, imagery, and rhyme. This activity required students to interpret layered meanings within poetic language and apply similar analytical processes when crafting their own poetic pieces, thereby deepening their understanding of literary devices and enhancing their critical interpretation skills.

3. Collaborative Narrative Building

Working in small groups, students co-constructed stories, with each member responsible for developing a different section. This activity emphasized teamwork, negotiation, and the integration of multiple viewpoints. Students critically evaluated the contributions of peers, resolved narrative inconsistencies, and adapted ideas to maintain coherence and thematic unity, thereby strengthening collaborative problem-solving skills.

4. Reflection Journals

Following each creative writing session, students completed reflective journal entries describing their writing processes, challenges encountered, and insights gained. This ongoing reflective practice aimed to promote metacognition by encouraging students to examine their reasoning, evaluate their decision-making strategies, and identify areas for cognitive growth.

Across all activities, students were consistently encouraged to question assumptions, explore alternative interpretations, and provide reasoned justification for their creative choices.

Data Collection

To evaluate the impact of creative writing on critical thinking, the study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources. Data collection spanned 10 weeks, with the experimental group participating in weekly creative writing sessions.

1. Pre- and Post-Tests



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Both the experimental and control groups completed a standardized critical thinking assessment before and after the intervention. The test measured several components of critical thinking, including the ability to analyze complex texts, identify logical fallacies, evaluate arguments, and construct evidence-based counterarguments. The assessment included reading comprehension items, argument evaluation tasks, and short analytical essays. Comparative analysis of pre- and post-test scores enabled the researcher to measure changes in critical thinking performance.

2. Student Journals

Reflective journals submitted weekly by the experimental group served as a qualitative data source. Entries were evaluated using a rubric assessing depth of reflection, clarity of reasoning, and originality in problem-solving. Journal analysis focused on identifying patterns related to cognitive growth, such as the ability to consider multiple viewpoints, justify decisions, and evaluate their own thinking processes.

3. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 students selected to represent diverse academic levels and demographic backgrounds. The interviews explored students' perceptions of how creative writing influenced their critical thinking. Sample interview questions included:

- *How have creative writing activities influenced your ability to think critically in other subjects?*
- *Can you describe a moment when a creative writing task helped you view a problem from a new perspective?*
- *Do you feel more confident in solving problems after participating in creative writing activities?*

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring insights and common experiences.

4. Teacher Observations

Throughout the intervention, the researcher conducted systematic classroom observations to document student engagement, participation in discussions, and use of critical thinking strategies during creative writing activities. A structured checklist was used to record behaviors such as questioning assumptions, making inferences, evaluating peers' ideas, and providing reasoned arguments.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired-sample *t*-tests to compare the critical thinking performance of the experimental and control groups. This statistical procedure



enabled the researcher to determine whether improvements in critical thinking scores differed significantly between the two groups over the course of the intervention.

Qualitative data obtained from student journals, interviews, and classroom observations were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. An iterative coding process was employed to identify recurring themes related to critical thinking development. Multiple readings of the data ensured accuracy, consistency, and reliability in theme identification. These qualitative findings provided nuanced insights into students' cognitive processes and their perceptions of how creative writing contributed to their critical thinking abilities.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the appropriate school authorities. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Students were assured that participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. To protect privacy and ensure transparency, all data were anonymized, and personal identifiers were removed before analysis and reporting.

Results

The study's findings draw on both quantitative data from critical thinking assessments and qualitative data from journals, interviews, and classroom observations. The results indicate clear differences between students who participated in creative writing activities and those who received traditional English instruction.

Quantitative Results

Pre- and Post-Test Performance

The critical thinking assessment administered at the beginning and end of the study evaluated students' abilities to analyze arguments, evaluate evidence, and form reasoned conclusions. Comparative analysis of pre- and post-test scores revealed notable distinctions between the two groups.

Experimental Group (Creative Writing Condition)

Students in the experimental group demonstrated substantial improvement in critical thinking skills. Their scores increased by an average of **25%**, corresponding to a mean gain of **8.5 points out of 40**. A paired-sample *t*-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant ($t = 5.6, p < .001$), indicating a strong positive effect of creative writing activities on critical thinking development.

Control Group (Traditional Curriculum)



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The control group showed only minimal improvement, with an average increase of **5%**, or **1.8 points out of 40**. The paired-sample *t*-test revealed that this gain was not statistically significant ($t = 1.3, p = .19$), suggesting that the traditional English curriculum had little measurable impact on critical thinking growth during the study period.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The comparative results indicate that creative writing activities produced significantly greater gains in critical thinking than traditional English instruction. These findings highlight the potential value of integrating creative writing into English curricula to promote higher-order thinking.

Qualitative Results (Intro)

Qualitative data collected from journals, interviews, and classroom observations offered deeper insights into the ways creative writing shaped students' critical thinking. The thematic analysis revealed several recurring patterns that illustrated how students cognitively and emotionally engaged with the creative writing tasks.

Theme 1: Enhanced Ability to Consider Multiple Perspectives

Many students in the experimental group reported that creative writing activities helped them better understand and appreciate different perspectives. Writing stories with complex characters and motivations required them to think critically about why characters acted the way they did, often leading to insights about how different life experiences can shape viewpoints.

One student stated, "In my story, I made one character really selfish, but I had to think about why they acted that way. It made me realize that people aren't just good or bad, they have reasons for everything they do." This insight reflects the cognitive process of considering alternative viewpoints—a key component of critical thinking.

Theme 2: Improved Problem-Solving Skills

Students in the experimental group also reported an increase in their ability to solve problems creatively. As part of the creative writing activities, students had to overcome obstacles in their stories, such as resolving conflicts between characters or ensuring a logical plot progression. These activities mirrored the problem-solving processes required in academic tasks, which involved identifying problems, evaluating potential solutions, and selecting the most effective course of action.

For instance, a student reflected, "When I had to figure out how my character would get out of a tricky situation, I realized that sometimes in real life, there isn't just one answer. You need to think through different possibilities before deciding what's best." This reflection underscores how the act of writing allowed students to engage in metacognitive processes—thinking about their thinking—which is critical for developing problem-solving skills.



Theme 3: Increased Confidence in Articulating Ideas

The creative writing activities also fostered a sense of confidence among students in expressing their ideas. Several students mentioned that through the process of writing and revising their stories, they learned how to articulate complex ideas more clearly and confidently. They were more willing to share their thoughts in class discussions and felt empowered to present their arguments with supporting evidence, both in their creative writing and in other subject areas.

“I never thought I was good at writing, but when I started creating stories, I realized I could come up with really cool ideas and explain them well. Now I feel like I can do the same in other subjects, like history or science,” said one student.

Theme 4: Reflection and Self-Awareness

The reflective journaling component of the creative writing activities played a critical role in enhancing students' self-awareness and their ability to reflect on their cognitive processes. Through weekly journal entries, students were encouraged to think about how their writing related to their own lives, and many indicated that this helped them become more aware of their thinking patterns and decision-making processes.

For example, a student commented, "Writing stories has made me more aware of how I think. Before, I didn't really pay attention to how I make decisions, but now I try to understand the reasons behind my choices. It helps me make better decisions." This type of reflection not only nurtured critical thinking but also fostered a deeper understanding of the students' own learning processes.

Classroom Observations:

Classroom observations corroborated these findings. The experimental group demonstrated more active participation in discussions, particularly when discussing character motivations, ethical dilemmas, and narrative choices. In contrast, students in the control group tended to engage more passively in class discussions and often focused on surface-level analyses of texts. During group discussions in creative writing sessions, students in the experimental group frequently challenged each other's ideas, asked questions to clarify reasoning, and built upon one another's thoughts—behaviors characteristic of critical thinking.

Observations also revealed that students in the experimental group appeared more confident in expressing their opinions and were more willing to engage in debates or offer alternative viewpoints during class discussions. These behaviors were less frequent in the control group, where students often adhered to established interpretations or relied on teacher guidance to navigate their responses.

Summary of Findings



- **Quantitative:** The experimental group showed a significant improvement in critical thinking scores (25%) compared to the control group, which showed a modest improvement of 5%. This suggests that creative writing activities had a substantial impact on the development of critical thinking skills.
- **Qualitative:** The analysis of student journals, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that creative writing activities encouraged students to consider multiple perspectives, improved their problem-solving abilities, increased their confidence in articulating ideas, and fostered self-awareness through reflection.

In conclusion, the combination of creative writing activities and reflective practices appears to have a strong positive impact on students' critical thinking skills. The results suggest that engaging students in creative writing can help them develop essential cognitive skills that are transferable across various academic subjects and real-world scenarios.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that creative writing activities can significantly enhance students' critical thinking skills (Javid & Sayyara, 2024). This section will explore the implications of these results in the context of existing literature, discuss the mechanisms through which creative writing may foster critical thinking, and consider the broader impact of these findings for educational practice. Furthermore, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research will be addressed.

Implications of the Findings

The results of this study align with previous research suggesting that creative writing can stimulate cognitive processes essential for critical thinking. As noted by Harris (2010), the reflective and imaginative nature of creative writing encourages students to think more deeply about complex issues, consider diverse perspectives, and evaluate their own thought processes. In this study, the experimental group demonstrated significant improvements in their ability to analyze and evaluate arguments, indicating that creative writing fosters the very skills associated with critical thinking—problem-solving, argumentation, and the ability to approach issues from multiple angles (Facione, 2015).

Moreover, the increase in critical thinking abilities was not limited to the creative writing tasks alone. Many students reported that the skills they developed through writing stories, analyzing character motivations, and reflecting on their own processes translated into their ability to engage more thoughtfully with texts in other subjects. This suggests that creative writing may serve as a powerful tool for developing transferable cognitive skills that extend beyond the English classroom. Students in the experimental group felt more confident in their ability to engage with complex ideas and communicate their thoughts clearly, a skill that is vital across disciplines (Javid,



2023). This finding echoes the work of Perkins and Salomon (1989), who argued that creative tasks that promote cognitive flexibility—such as creative writing—can have broad applications in developing critical thinking across various contexts.

Mechanisms of Impact

The improvement in critical thinking among the experimental group can be attributed to several key features of the creative writing activities. One of the most prominent mechanisms is the engagement with complex problem-solving tasks. In the creative writing exercises, students were required to construct narratives, resolve conflicts, and explore characters with complex motivations. These tasks mirror the critical thinking process of evaluating multiple perspectives, considering potential outcomes, and making decisions based on evidence. As one student noted, creating stories helped them realize that problems often have more than one solution—a crucial aspect of critical thinking (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Another mechanism is the promotion of reflective thinking. The reflective journaling component of the study encouraged students to engage in metacognition—thinking about their own thinking. As students reflected on their creative process, they had the opportunity to evaluate their choices, question assumptions, and refine their ideas. This metacognitive activity not only improved their self-awareness but also encouraged them to approach problems more strategically and with a greater sense of intellectual independence. The reflective aspect of creative writing has been shown to enhance critical thinking by helping students understand the reasoning behind their ideas and actions, thus fostering deeper cognitive engagement (Wallace & Williams, 2008).

Additionally, the collaborative aspect of the narrative-building exercise likely played a significant role in promoting critical thinking. Working with peers to create a collective narrative forced students to engage in negotiation, debate, and the synthesis of diverse ideas. Collaboration in this context required students to critically evaluate their peers' ideas and integrate different perspectives into a coherent whole. This cooperative form of critical thinking has been shown to enhance the development of problem-solving skills by requiring students to articulate, defend, and reconsider their arguments in light of others' contributions (Johnson & Johnson, 1994).

Broader Educational Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for English education and broader pedagogical practices. Integrating creative writing into English curricula offers students a dynamic and engaging way to develop critical thinking skills. As many contemporary educational frameworks, such as the Common Core Standards, emphasize the development of higher-order thinking skills (e.g., analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), creative writing could be an invaluable tool for meeting these goals. By encouraging students to create their own narratives, analyze characters' decisions, and reflect on their thought processes, educators can help students build the cognitive flexibility necessary for critical thinking.



Moreover, as the study suggests, creative writing fosters an environment where students feel empowered to explore complex ideas without fear of failure. In contrast to more traditional forms of writing instruction, which may prioritize correctness over exploration, creative writing encourages students to take intellectual risks and challenge conventional ideas. This freedom to experiment with ideas may be particularly beneficial for students who struggle with more traditional academic writing or who find it difficult to express themselves in structured essay formats. As Kress (1994) points out, creative writing offers students a way to explore different facets of themselves and the world around them, which may lead to greater intellectual curiosity and a more open-minded approach to learning.

Furthermore, the study highlights the value of self-reflection in the development of critical thinking. Reflective writing, such as the journal entries used in this study, provides students with an opportunity to process their thinking and assess their learning progress. According to Dewey (1933), reflection is a key component of effective learning, as it encourages students to actively engage with their experiences and draw connections between new knowledge and existing understanding. By incorporating regular opportunities for reflection into the curriculum, educators can help students develop the skills to monitor and regulate their own thinking, which is essential for becoming independent critical thinkers.

Limitations of the Study

While the results of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of creative writing on critical thinking, there are several limitations that should be considered. First, the study was conducted within a specific educational context (a high school in an urban district), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Future research should consider replicating this study in different educational contexts (e.g., rural schools, different grade levels, or international settings) to determine whether the results hold across diverse student populations.

Second, while the use of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a robust analysis, the study relied on self-reported data from student journals and interviews, which may be subject to bias. Future studies could incorporate additional objective measures of critical thinking, such as peer evaluations or analysis of students' written work across disciplines, to complement the self-reported data and provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of creative writing on critical thinking.

Lastly, the study's relatively short duration (10 weeks) means that it only captured the immediate effects of creative writing on critical thinking. Longitudinal studies that track the development of critical thinking skills over a longer period would provide more insight into the long-term impact of creative writing on students' cognitive abilities.



Future Research Directions

Future research should explore the long-term effects of creative writing on critical thinking, particularly to assess whether the skills developed through creative writing persist beyond the English classroom and influence performance in other academic disciplines. Longitudinal studies could track students over multiple semesters or academic years to determine whether creative writing continues to support critical thinking development over time.

Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the impact of different types of creative writing activities on critical thinking. For example, comparative studies could examine whether certain types of creative writing—such as poetry versus narrative writing—have differential effects on specific aspects of critical thinking, such as argumentation or problem-solving. Research that explores how creative writing intersects with other cognitive and emotional factors, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence, could also provide a more holistic understanding of its impact on student development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that creative writing activities can significantly enhance students' critical thinking skills in English lessons. The findings reveal that engaging students in creative writing tasks, such as narrative creation and reflective journaling, encourages them to consider multiple perspectives, solve complex problems, and articulate their ideas with greater confidence. The experimental group showed a marked improvement in critical thinking abilities compared to the control group, supporting the idea that creative writing fosters cognitive flexibility and metacognitive awareness, both key components of critical thinking. These results highlight the value of incorporating creative writing into English curricula as a tool for developing transferable skills that extend beyond the language arts. As education increasingly prioritizes critical thinking across disciplines, creative writing offers a dynamic and effective approach to nurturing students' intellectual independence and problem-solving abilities, equipping them for success in academic and real-world challenges (Ismayilli et al, 2023). Future research should explore the long-term effects of creative writing on critical thinking and its broader applications.

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A Self-Determination Theory Model of Gamified EFL Intrinsic Motivation

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Abstract; The growing use of gamification in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) areas has provoked important issues regarding how the design of a game can motivate and keep learners engaged for a long time. This paper presents a theoretical framework of the role of game elements grounded on self-determination theory in sustaining internal motivation in the case of collectivist EFL cultures, as opposed to previous models that considered gamification merely as a form of external reward. Through the analysis of the mediating factors of task authenticity and anxiety reduction, and the moderating variable of cultural power distance, the research offers a context-sensitive comprehension of the mechanisms through which gamified, need-supportive structures protract learner engagement. The proposed model brings into focus the importance of feedback loops, progression indicators, and social interaction in the process of enhancing perceived competence and relatedness in EFL learning. The structure additionally provides for the crafting of gamified pedagogical environments that support intrinsic motivation and sustainable learning practices. Hence, this study is a forte for theory development by incorporating self-determination theory in the EFL sector and providing a systematic basis for later investigations into the synergy between gamified learning and motivation.

Keywords: *Gamification; Self-Determination Theory; Intrinsic Motivation; Sustained Engagement; Language Learning Motivation; Gamified Instruction.*

1. Introduction

Gamification in the EFL teaching has transformed to be one of the fastest-growing pedagogical innovations that supports the integration of game elements such as point, badges, challenges,

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feedback, and rewards into the learning process in order to create a more interesting and motivating environment (Arunsirot, 2020; Deterding et al., 2011). It is one of the most common practices in EFL, and this has been made possible by the use of technology, for example, Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Padlet, which are all online platforms, and they are all providing fun and interactive ways to make students better in vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and language competence in general (Degirmencioğlu & Gılanlıoğlu, 2023; Qadri Tayeh & Malkawi, 2024; Sanemueang, 2025). The latest researchers assert the existence of several benefits that gamification can offer among which the boosting of syntactic knowledge, reflecting learning, and the lessening of anxiousness are the most emphasized ones (Huseinović, 2024; Jara Chiriboga et al., 2025). Gamification has not only been a source of fun but gamified systems have now become educational interventions based on theories of motivation such as flow and SDT, where the aim is to gradually, but surely, instill, with the help of the need satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the acquisition of the behavior, emotion, and cognition that corresponds to intrinsic engagement (Tursunbayevich, 2024; Luu et al., 2025).

Although the results are encouraging, a significant question remains to be answered that whether the gamified engagement actually intrinsic and self-sustainable or it is just fueled by external factors such as rewards and competition (Sailer & Homner, 2020). In many EFL classes around Asia, the teaching approach is predominantly teacher-centered, grammar-oriented, and exam-driven, consequently, limiting the amount of student autonomy and real communicative skills practice (Borja et al., 2015; Khaled et al., 2020; Nguyen & Boers, 2019). Such a milieu often results in compliant and extrinsically motivated learners instead of self-determined ones (Chang, 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Learners' anxiety, dependency on teacher validation, and lack of autonomy are some of the factors that lead to disengagement and ultimately to shallow learning (Lamb, 2017). Gamification is one of the methods that promise to solve these motivational deficiencies; however, some critics assert that the heavy reliance on rewards might only encourage extrinsic control rather than developing internalized, autonomous motivation (Hanus & Fox, 2015; Mekler et al., 2017). Even though gamification was widely accepted, the majority of its designs still followed the behaviorist approach, which highlighted the compliance driven by rewards instead of the engagement driven by autonomy. This inconsistency in theory demands a new conceptualization of gamified learning based on the SDT viewpoint.

Self-determination theory (SDT), first created by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), is a very strong theory to explain that great learning environments nurture intrinsic motivation or disrupt it through satisfying the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The satisfaction of these needs leads to persistence, engagement, and well-being, which the learners experience very positively (Ryan & Deci, 2024). SDT, in the context of gamified EFL teaching, demonstrates the game mechanics specifically like leaderboards, badges, and feedback systems that may support or annoy these needs (Sailer et al., 2017). For example, leaderboards can be viewed as a source of recognition of one's capabilities and an avenue for competition, but at the



same time, they may create a distance among peers and impose a performance-related stress (Kratochvil et al., 2025). Similarly, reward systems can push students to give their best in a short period of time but may cause a downfall in the process of self-regulation and the development of intrinsic interest if the students consider them to be instruments of external control (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). Hence, SDT gives a very comprehensive and advanced theoretical basis for analyzing critically how gamified environments impact the quality of motivation, not just the quantity of motivation.

From this point, the paper being discussed presents a framework based on SDT for gamified EFL instruction which signifies that intrinsic motivation and protracted participation can be comprehended theoretically via the SDT principles. The major purpose of this theoretical paper is to amalgamate and critically discuss the present-day gamification research through the SDT lens leading to an analytically grounded model that conceptualizes the psychological mechanisms connecting the gamified design elements to learner motivation and engagement. This research's novelty is in combining the gamification design principles with the motivational psychology in order to specify the theoretical conditions under which, and the reasons why, particular game elements may lead to self-determined instead of extrinsically motivated learning behaviors. This framework's importance can be viewed from three perspectives; first, it adds a new dimension to the theoretical comprehension of learners' motivation in the field of technology-mediated language learning; second, it introduces some guiding rules for designing gamified instruction that supports autonomy and enhances competence; third, it gives a conceptual basis for subsequent research directed towards the understanding of the EFL contexts' motivational pathways. This paper solely relies on theory, it does not conduct any data collection but rather synthesizes existing evidence to provide a coherent analytical framework for later empirical validation. In order to provide a clear understanding and to direct this conceptual exploration, the following guiding research question is posed that how can gamified instructional design systematically support learners' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are essential for intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement in EFL learning? By advocating a thoroughgoing theoretical scheme, which is the integration of cultural and affective dimensions to the SDT model, the question raised by the paper will be resolved through the process of explaining sustained engagement. After defining this goal, the subsequent sections examine the theoretical underpinnings of SDT and gamification, conducting a critical review of previous research, and preparing the ground for the suggested conceptual model.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Integrating Gamified Learning and Second Language Acquisition

The role of gamified learning in the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become a matter of great research interest, very much owing to the claims of its capacity to bring about such things as engagement, motivation, and persistence in language learning



(Deterding et al., 2011; Luu et al., 2025). Gamification is a broad concept that implies the integration of game elements, mostly points, badges, leaderboards, levels, quests, and narratives into the non-game learning environments, all the while aiming for a more engaging and motivating experience (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019; Sailer et al., 2017). Nevertheless, empirical evidence is in favor of positive effects on the participation, task frequency, and affective responses (Degirmencioglu & Gilanlioglu, 2023; Yang, 2022), but the consequences are very much linked to the teaching context and quality of design. To illustrate, poorly constructed leaderboards or too much external rewards might bring about only the temporary compliance rather than the sustained engagement of students, thus pointing out the importance of the principled and theory-driven approach (Mekler et al., 2017; Sailer & Homner, 2020). Different studies have done the mapping of specific game mechanics to SDT constructs and engagement outcomes. One of the examples is that points, badges, and leaderboards mainly correspond to the need for competence, while narrative and choice mechanisms are in favor of autonomy and relatedness. It can be seen in Table 1 that points and badges being the methods of giving rewards and recognition, however, they do not make the maintenance of competence as their primary goal which may lead to the overemphasis of extrinsic incentives. Hence, their motivational power is determined by the degree to which feedback is interpreted as informative or controlling, a subtlety that is very important to SDT.

Table 1. Mapping Game Elements to SDT

Game Element	SDT Psychological Need	Potential Engagement Outcome
Points/Badges/Levels	Competence	Increased self-efficacy, skill mastery
Choice/Customization	Autonomy	Enhanced intrinsic motivation, learner control
Collaboration/Team Challenges	Relatedness	Peer interaction, social engagement
Narrative/Storylines	Autonomy and Relatedness	Emotional investment, sustained participation

Although there have been numerous studies on the topic of gamification, the seeping research has largely considered game elements and the benefits of motivation separately. Not many researchers combine motivational theory with the design and assessment of gamified EFL tasks. The lack of such an approach puts the SDT at the forefront of theories that help us understand the intrinsic motivation and long-lasting engagement that can be brought about by gamification.



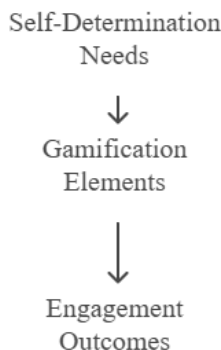


Figure 1. A Conceptual Diagram

2.2. SDT as a Motivational Lens

SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2024) argues that the basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness are crucial for achieving optimal motivation and psychological well-being. In the context of language learning, the need for autonomy is the learner's view of having a say in their learning activities, the need for competence means feeling effective and mastering the skills, and the need for relatedness is the feeling of having social ties and being accepted (Noels, 2001; Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Satisfying these needs is a factor of higher intrinsic motivation, persistence, and self-regulation while controlling or externally dominated learning environments can reduce engagement and lead to demotivation (Deci et al., 1999; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2021).

SDT presents a more than one-sided perspective of motivation along a self-determination continuum, which successfully reflects the internalization of external goals into personally endorsed values, covering all the way from amotivation to fully integrated regulation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). In gamified EFL, the aforementioned features such as narrative scaffolds, adaptive challenges, and meaningful feedback can be really powerful in enhancing learners' autonomy and competence, thus promoting internalized, self-determined engagement. On the contrary, if the learners' psychological needs are not met, then the overemphasis on points, badges or competitive rankings could eventually lead to a decrease in intrinsic interest (Luu et al., 2025; Sailer et al., 2017).

2.3. Bridging Gamification and SDT in Second Language Acquisition

The combination of gamification and SDT is a very good way to demonstrate how different elements of gaming can lead to the same motivational and cognitive outcomes in learning a new language as by traditional methods through non-gaming means. Simple games along with progress indicators act as feedback sources which are telling the learners not only the



distance they have covered but also their skills are being strengthened; badges and leaderboards can be social recognition that enhances relatedness; and narrative quests merely provide significant contexts that support self-determination and the need to be involved in (Sailer et al., 2017; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). With curriculum objectives and scaffolding language tasks, these features can create a continuum of learner interest, support taking risks and bring retention; outcomes that are necessary for communicative competence and fluency (Lamb, 2017; Degirmencioglu & Gilanlioglu, 2023).

Furthermore, the results from studies suggest that gamified intervention based on the principles of SDT provides engagement that is deeper compared to that of the latter mentioned ones inspired solely by extrinsic rewards. Cornering the issue of SLT and pedagogy alignment (Jara Chiriboga et al., 2025; Yang, 2022), researchers have found that autonomy-supportive digital playful tasks offer students the liberation to take part in communication, the lowering of anxiety, and the propelling of flow experiences. On the contrary, where gamification is done through competition or extrinsic rewards and provision is not made for psychological needs, it may not only lead to uncommitted participation but also withdrawal (Mekler et al., 2017; Sailer & Homner, 2020). Thus, an integration of gamified and SDT that is theoretically informed can help second language acquisition practitioners in crafting interventions of the nature that they are not only engaging but also promoting learning that is gradually and intrinsically motivated.

The merger of gamification and SDT within second language acquisition leads to the development of a conceptual framework whereby game features are treated as facilitators to meet the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thus resulting in intrinsic motivation and constant engagement. The framework provides a more analytical angle on the strategic design of gamified interventions as it reveals the interdependence of pedagogical aims, motivational processes, and learning outcomes rather than depicting gamification or motivation as separate and additive factors. Such integration creates a new avenue for empirical research to explore the impact of various gamified features on motivation and language proficiency in heterogeneous EFL environments. For greater elucidation, Table 2 comprises the mapping of SDT necessities towards gamification elements, and the anticipated engagement consequences.



Table 2. Mapping SDT Needs to Gamification Elements and Engagement Outcomes

SDT Basic Need	Gamification Elements	Expected Engagement Outcomes
Autonomy (sense of control & choice)	Choice of tasks/paths, branching scenarios, customizable avatars	Increased intrinsic motivation, greater ownership of learning
Competence (sense of effectiveness & skill)	Points, badges, levels, performance feedback, challenges	Improved skill mastery, confidence, behavioral engagement
Relatedness (sense of social connection)	Leaderboards, team challenges, collaborative quests, discussion forums	Enhanced social engagement, peer support, emotional engagement
Motivational reinforcement (supporting sustained effort)	Streaks, progress bars, narrative/storytelling, meaningful rewards	Sustained engagement, persistence in learning tasks, agentic engagement

3. Literature Selection and Coding Procedure

The study applies a conceptual synthesis method (Torraco, 2016; Snyder, 2019) instead of a systematic review as its main objective is to weave together theories and empirical knowledge in a conceptual manner rather than in a statistical way. The synthesis is concerned with exposing the links between gamification, motivation, and engagement through the lens of SDT. This conceptual synthesis was based on Torraco's (2016) four-stage approach to integrative literature review, which was adapted to the field of gamified EFL instruction and SDT. The method included the next steps.

The domain was delineated.

The researchers restricted the literature to those studies and theoretical contributions that explicitly talked about gamification or game elements in language learning contexts and also to those studies that applied the SDT model to motivation in EFL/ELT settings. In the course of the research, the researchers utilized the most important academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC) to search for the combinations of the keywords gamification, game elements, SDT, intrinsic motivation, engagement, and EFL/ESL. The scoping phase had no limitation regarding dates so as to include both classic and contemporary works.

Identifying theoretical patterns

From the chosen pool, titles and abstracts were examined for relevance. Full texts that discussed gamification design features, motivational mechanisms, or engagement outcomes were kept for conceptual analysis. 53 studies were finally included in the synthesis after screening (the included corpus consisted of empirical studies, meta-analyses, and theoretical/conceptual articles).

Comparing conceptual frameworks

The chosen investigations were put under a comparative microscope to see the differences in each source's interpretation of game elements and design features, SDT constructs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), and engagement outcomes (behavioral, emotional, cognitive, agentic). The first step was that two researchers worked separately on coding the papers through a pre-



structured coding template. They then discussed and came to a mutual understanding for defining the codes in case of any disputes. The coding was mainly concerned with connecting design features to SDT needs, naming the mediators/moderators reported, and accumulating proof regarding the time dynamics (e.g., short-term vs long-term engagement).

Developing integrative propositions

To continue with the mapped patterns, the researchers have come up with the recurring mechanisms and tensions (e.g., informational vs controlling feedback; cultural moderators) and thus have developed integrative propositions that link need-supportive gamified design to need satisfaction and subsequently to internalization and sustained engagement. In cases where empirical findings were not in agreement, the researchers made the boundary conditions explicit and proposed accessible moderators for future research.

4. Conceptual Approach and Theoretical Positioning

This manuscript utilizes a conceptual synthesis method instead of an empirical one. The maturing of the framework is being done through a very critical review process (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016), that merges the theories of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2024) with real-world data from gamification research in education (e.g., Sailer et al., 2017; Hanus & Fox, 2015; Li et al., 2024). The examined literature was categorized into three major points, namely, the application of SDT needs in gamified learning environments, the motivational effects of design that support autonomy, competence and relatedness, and the linking of game elements to the prolonging of engagement in EFL settings through a mediating process.

The review is not systematic in a quantitative sense; however, it follows a transparent, purposive synthesis process that ensures the inclusion of the most conceptually influential and empirically supported studies that relate SDT and gamification. Through iterative comparison and theoretical abstraction, the research is able to uncover constructs and relational patterns that have appeared in previous frameworks. Theoretical contribution of this paper is based on the fact that it integrates SDT applications with technology-mediated EFL environments by proposing an integrative framework that links gamification mechanics to need-supportive motivational processes. In particular, it performs the reconceptualization of game elements (e.g. badges, leaderboards, quests) not as external rewards but rather as psychological affordances that could possibly nurture autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, the paper provides a critical reinterpretation of gamified motivation as an intrinsically driven system rather than a reward-based one.

5. Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed structure boosts the model of need-supportive gamification by Sailer and Homner (2020) to the point of practically the same and agentic engagement as a higher-order motivational outcome. While Sailer and Homner's framework opened connections between the usage of game



design elements and the meeting of basic psychological needs, it was very much in the background and indeed biased against any particular domain. The present framework is already moving much further, putting forth the idea that it is precisely the three contextual moderators, namely linguistic task authenticity, cultural power distance, and learner anxiety, which are crucial in the interaction between such need-supportive mechanics and EFL settings in Asia. In short, the model assumes three causal phases:

- (1) Need-supportive gamified design (game elements promoting choice, feedback on competence, social connection)
- (2) Satisfaction of social needs (namely, self-regard, compassion, and resoluteness)
- (3) Self-determined motivation and engagement outcomes, including behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and mainly agentic engagement, are the ones defined as learners' proactive contribution which is to shape their own learning environment (Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013; Reeve, 2023).

This framework diverges from previous gamification models that mainly emphasized compliance and performance gains, and instead considered engagement as a multi-dimensional and self-regulatory process rather than a response to external stimuli. Agentic engagement is characterized as a higher-order construct that emerges when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are jointly satisfied - indicating the learner's internalization of motivation and active role in co-constructing learning interactions. The authors propose three mediating and moderating mechanisms to explain the differences in the motivational impact of gamified designs across various contexts:

Cultural power distance (moderator)

In collectivist or high power-distance cultures, if autonomy-supportive design elements (e.g., open choice, flexible goals) conflict with the norms of authority or conformity in the classroom, they may not necessarily increase the autonomy of the students.

Task authenticity (mediator)

The similarity of gamified tasks to real-world communicative use mediates the internalization process, thus boosting the feeling of competence and meaningfulness.

Reduction of anxiety (mediator/moderator)

The introduced playful and game-like formats in the evaluations, thus, indirectly making the participant's intrinsic motivation and engagement to be sustained.

Generally, the model plays a significant role in the SDT-based gamification research improving it via the incorporation of contextual and affective aspects in the motivational route and thus providing a framework that is more in tune with cultures and also grounded in pedagogy. It



indicates that the engagement in EFL gamified learning is not only through the rewards that are well-designed but also through the students' perceived agency, being the active will of learners to transfer the influence to the learning activities, other learners and the outcomes of the tasks. As depicted in Figure 2, the model outlines a three-phase motivation process starting from need-supportive game-like design to sustained engagement, where psychological need satisfaction and self-determined motivation act as a mediator. While task authenticity and anxiety decrease act as mediators promoting internalization, cultural power distance limits the initial supportive effects of game design on needs.

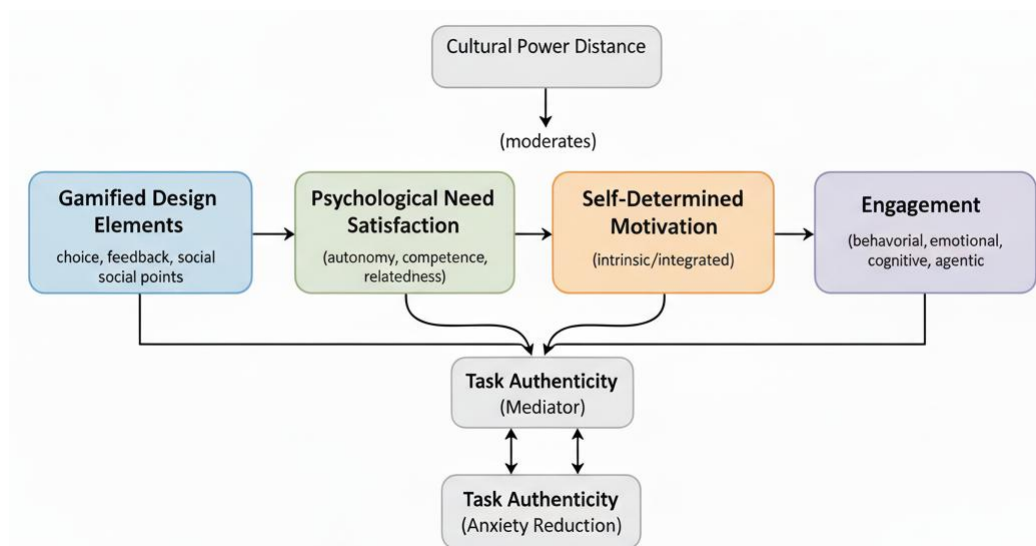


Figure 2. SDT in EFL Learning

6. Implications and Future Directions

Therefore, SDT signals an absolute period for theory, education and research to step into the field of gamified EFL teaching. In offering a new perspective on gamification with respect to the basic psychological needs, the new model not only encourages the development of motivational theory in the process of second language learning but also gives practical guidelines for both teaching design and research with humans as subjects. The combination of SDT and gamification not only represents a major step forward in language learning motivation research but also a revolutionary idea in the field of language learning motivation. This framework does not map the core SDT factors onto digital, game-mediated environments only, but it also considers the teacher support and feedback as part of the very digital gamification process (Noels et al., 2019; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017). Moreover, it is a massive SDT application, which considers gamification as a need-supportive structure for learners rather than a mere technology that enhances learning (Ryan & Deci, 2024; Sailer & Homner, 2020). The most striking thing about this model is that it opposes the instrumentalist perspective that sees extrinsic rewards as the main source of motivation in gamified learning. Rather, it argues that motivation is an internalization process in which the



elements of the game move from being extrinsic motivators to being owned and regulated by the learner positively (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hanus & Fox, 2015). As a result, this model implies that digital teaching methods can be an effective environment for self-determination practice, and this is a step beyond just behavioral manipulation.

The model already from a teaching point of view suggests important factors for creating gamified EFL learning environments that could not only draw the students but also involve them in a genuine and long-term way. First, the issue of authenticity could not be stressed enough; it is a must that the game elements were meaningful in the context and were also aligned with the communicative learning goals rather than being imposed as something superficial just for being there (Domínguez et al., 2013). Learner choice, which is accompanied by customizable tasks, flexible pacing, and adaptive difficulty, directly promotes autonomy and thus activates engagement (Reeve, 2012). Besides, feedback systems such as progress tracking, mastery-based leveling, and formative feedback should be applied in a way that their effects are competence-enhancing and not performance-induced anxieties (Li et al., 2024). Moreover, the development of collaborative gamified tasks (like team-based challenges, peer quests) could be a means of relatedness promotion and competition pressure reduction, thus a social learning environment is created that may even support the case of techniques application mentioned earlier (Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). Therefore, the principles of gamification hereby established are directed both towards deeper psychological engagement and less demanding language learning outcomes. The suggested model for research purposes guarantees the empirical testing of the whole by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Mixed-methods designs can produce statistical evidence and contextual explanation (Dörnyei, 2020) by bringing out how need satisfaction works as a mediator between gamified design features and learner engagement. Longitudinal studies, actually, are very important to track changes in motivation over time, so, they will be able to separate passing excitement from lasting involvement (Mekler et al., 2017; Sun & Hsieh, 2018). Besides, cross-cultural studies will probably be able to show the influence of sociocultural factors like collective thinking or exam-oriented learning on the processes of internalization that are so important for SDT (Lamb, 2017; Chen et al., 2022). In addition, narrative accounts of learners and classroom ethnographies will be forms of qualitative research that will allow the development of theories by uncovering the self-determination experience in gamified EFL settings.

In order to overcome the current conceptual model limitations, future empirical research can take some directions. First, validity studies in different cultures can check if the suggested gamified SDT framework for EFL learning is applicable without major changes in various cultural contexts. Second, longitudinal studies can explore how the links among need-supportive design, psychological need satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and sustained engagement change with time. Third, mixed-method designs that merge quantitative measures of engagement and motivation with qualitative insights from learners' interviews or classroom observations could give richer understanding of the mechanisms behind gamified EFL instruction.



7. Conclusion

This paper has indicated that the SDT be recognized as a basic perspective for the understanding of motivation in the case of gamified EFL teaching. The study regards gamification as a framework for motivation based on theory, which makes the question of how autonomy, competence, and relatedness jointly facilitate engagement and language learning processes a very complicated and therefore interesting one. The structured approach of gamified learning is set up to be a part of a psychological ecosystem that seeps through only minimally the external rewards and instead of that considers satisfaction of the learners' psychological needs as the main reason for their being and achieving. This blending of theories puts it to the hottest topic of research in motivation area by drawing the threads of SDT and the coming educational application of gamification together. It points out that viewing motivation as a process being dynamic, self-regulatory and long lasting is the major factor when it comes to external incentives. Therefore, it breaks the simplistic reductionist notions that limit gamification to behavior modification based on rewards and punishment and it shifts the focus to the cognitive and emotional processes that are at play in the learners being highly engaged in the language learning situations.

The framework encourages the behavior of the educators and designers of instructions to consider gamification as a planned practice grounded on the theory. The best EFL atmospheres which are gamified shouldn't be the ones that only apply and repeat the gaming mechanics but rather, intentionally combine them with the physiological needs of the learners so that, they are empowered to act rather than being controlled. The viewpoint stated above necessitates a transition from the designing for fun to the designing for autonomy, where playfulness is the medium for genuine learning, empowerment, and connection. The incorporation of SDT along with gamification ultimately leads to a more critical and reflective approach to the use of technology in language learning. It will demand that both researchers and practitioners shift their mindsets from being just enthusiastic to being very intentional in their approaches. That is, the innovations that will be backed by psychological theory, empirical rigor, and pedagogical ethics will be the ones that will rise. Only in this way can gamified instruction be regarded as a sustainable and transformative paradigm for the motivation of EFL learners in the digital age.

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Significance of Reading in Foreign Language Teaching and Correct Reading Strategies

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Abstract; This study investigates the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of three reading strategies—extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading—on language acquisition. The research involved 120 intermediate-level learners of a foreign language, divided into four groups: extensive reading, intensive reading, interactive reading, and a control group. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests measuring reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, as well as surveys, classroom observations, and interviews. The results revealed that all three experimental groups showed significant improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition compared to the control group. The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most significant vocabulary gains, while both the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups showed substantial improvements in reading comprehension. The study highlights that the choice of reading strategy can significantly influence learning outcomes, with intensive reading being particularly effective for vocabulary acquisition and extensive reading contributing to reading fluency. The Interactive Reading Group demonstrated high levels of learner engagement and motivation, underscoring the value of social interaction in language learning. The findings suggest that integrating multiple reading strategies into language teaching can foster a more comprehensive approach to language development.

Keywords: *Extensive reading, Intensive reading, Interactive reading, Vocabulary acquisition, Reading comprehension, Foreign language teaching*

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most critical skills in foreign language acquisition, playing a central role in enhancing linguistic proficiency, cognitive development, and cultural understanding. In foreign language teaching (FLT), reading serves not only as a means of acquiring vocabulary and grammatical structures but also as a window into the culture, values, and nuances of the target

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language. Through reading, learners are exposed to authentic language use, which aids in the development of their communicative competence and overall fluency.

One of the key advantages of reading in FLT is that it allows learners to engage with language in context. Unlike isolated vocabulary drills or grammar exercises, reading provides learners with the opportunity to see how language is used in real-world situations, which enhances their ability to understand and produce the language in meaningful contexts (Anderson, 1999). Additionally, reading fosters a deeper understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which the language is used, contributing to learners' intercultural competence—a vital aspect of language learning (Kramsch, 1993).

The importance of reading is underscored by research in second language acquisition (SLA), which suggests that reading extensively in a foreign language leads to significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and reading comprehension (Day & Bamford, 1998). Furthermore, reading enhances learners' cognitive abilities, such as attention to detail, inferencing skills, and the ability to synthesize information from different parts of the text (Snow, 2002). Reading also provides learners with a large amount of input that is necessary for language acquisition to occur (Krashen, 1985). This aligns with the Input Hypothesis, which posits that language learners acquire new language structures when exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly above their current level of competence (Krashen, 1982).

However, despite its importance, reading remains a challenging skill for many foreign language learners. The complexity of texts, coupled with limited vocabulary and unfamiliar grammatical structures, can make reading in a foreign language daunting (Nuttall, 2005). This challenge is further exacerbated by psychological factors, such as language anxiety or lack of motivation, which can hinder learners from engaging with reading tasks (Dörnyei, 2001). These barriers highlight the need for effective reading strategies in foreign language teaching, which can provide learners with the tools to overcome difficulties and improve their reading comprehension.

The purpose of this article is to explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching, emphasizing its cognitive, linguistic, and cultural benefits. It will also outline effective reading strategies that educators can use to enhance students' reading skills, focusing on approaches such as extensive and intensive reading, scaffolding, and interactive reading. By examining these strategies and their pedagogical implications, the article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how reading can be effectively integrated into language teaching practices to support language learners in developing their reading proficiency (Babayev, 2023).

1.2. The Role of Reading in Foreign Language Acquisition

Reading offers several cognitive and pedagogical benefits in the process of acquiring a foreign language. It is widely recognized that exposure to written texts is essential for language learners to expand their vocabulary and grasp grammatical structures in context (Anderson, 1999). As



learners engage with different types of texts, they internalize new words, phrases, and expressions, which eventually contribute to their fluency and understanding of the language.

Moreover, reading helps learners develop strategies for processing and understanding information in the foreign language, such as recognizing discourse markers and identifying main ideas (Carrell, 1988). These skills are crucial not only for language comprehension but also for the development of higher-order thinking, such as analysis and synthesis. In addition, reading helps learners familiarize themselves with cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and socio-cultural references embedded in the language (Kramsch, 1993). This broader cultural understanding fosters more effective communication and appreciation for the language.

1.3. Challenges in Foreign Language Reading

Despite the evident benefits of reading in foreign language teaching, learners often encounter challenges that hinder their ability to comprehend texts. These challenges can be classified into linguistic, cognitive, and psychological barriers.

Linguistic Challenges: One of the most common obstacles is the limited vocabulary of the learner. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, understanding a text becomes a laborious process, which may lead to frustration and disengagement (Nation, 2001). Additionally, learners may struggle with unfamiliar grammatical structures or complex sentence constructions that impede comprehension.

Cognitive Challenges: Cognitive difficulties arise when learners lack effective strategies for dealing with complex texts. For example, learners may struggle to identify key points, make inferences, or integrate new information with prior knowledge (Snow, 2002). This lack of strategy can result in a shallow understanding of the text.

Psychological Challenges: Language learners may also experience psychological barriers, such as lack of motivation or anxiety. Learners who are not confident in their reading skills may avoid reading activities or feel discouraged when they encounter difficult texts. This emotional response can affect their overall learning experience and hinder progress (Dörnyei, 2001).

2. Methods

To explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of various reading strategies, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the role of reading in language acquisition, the identification of key challenges faced by learners, and the evaluation of specific teaching strategies that can enhance reading comprehension and overall language proficiency.

2.1 Research Design



The study was designed to assess both the theoretical and practical aspects of reading in foreign language teaching. Two primary research questions guided the investigation:

1. How does reading contribute to the development of language proficiency in foreign language learners?
2. What are the most effective reading strategies for improving reading comprehension and overall language skills in the foreign language classroom?

To answer these questions, the study adopted a combination of experimental, observational, and survey-based data collection methods. The experiment focused on comparing the effectiveness of different reading strategies, while the qualitative components (observations and surveys) helped to capture learners' experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding reading tasks and strategies in the foreign language.

2.2 Participants

The participants in the study were 120 foreign language learners enrolled in intermediate-level language courses at a university. The learners represented a variety of first languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian, with English as the target foreign language. The learners were selected based on their enrollment in the same language program and their similar proficiency levels, as determined by a standardized language proficiency test (e.g., TOEFL or CEFR). This homogeneity helped to reduce variability in language ability and ensured that the focus remained on the impact of different reading strategies rather than individual language proficiency differences.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

2.3.1 Pre-test and Post-test

To measure the impact of reading strategies on learners' reading comprehension and overall language proficiency, a pre-test and post-test design was implemented. The pre-test assessed learners' baseline reading comprehension skills, vocabulary knowledge, and general language proficiency. The post-test, administered at the end of the intervention period, measured the same skills to assess any improvements.

Both tests consisted of a combination of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and cloze exercises based on reading passages from a variety of genres, including narrative, expository, and argumentative texts. The tests were designed to reflect the kind of reading materials students would encounter in real-world language use, ensuring ecological validity.

2.3.2 Experimental Intervention



The participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental groups, each exposed to a different reading strategy:

1. **Extensive Reading Group:** This group engaged in independent reading of longer texts (e.g., graded readers, short stories, news articles) over a 6-week period. The focus was on reading for general meaning, with minimal intervention from instructors.
2. **Intensive Reading Group:** This group participated in more structured reading activities, where short texts were read intensively with a focus on vocabulary acquisition, comprehension questions, and grammar analysis. Teachers provided explicit instruction on language features in the texts.
3. **Interactive Reading Group:** This group engaged in collaborative reading activities, such as pair or group discussions, role-plays, and debates based on the texts. This approach emphasized social interaction and negotiation of meaning.
4. **Control Group:** This group continued with their regular language learning curriculum without any specific focus on reading strategies. They engaged in typical language learning activities like vocabulary drills and grammar exercises but did not receive additional reading-based interventions.

The experimental intervention lasted for 6 weeks, with all groups reading approximately 30 minutes per day. The different reading strategies were implemented by the instructor, who had received training on how to effectively facilitate each of the strategies.

2.3.3 Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to capture the interaction between the students and the reading activities. Two researchers, trained in observation techniques, observed each class for a total of 15 hours. They took field notes on student engagement, teacher-student interactions, and the specific strategies being employed during the reading tasks. This data was used to assess how well the strategies were being implemented and how students were responding to them.

2.3.4 Surveys and Interviews

After the intervention, learners were asked to complete surveys that assessed their attitudes toward the reading strategies, their motivation to read in the foreign language, and their perceived improvement in reading skills (Javid & Sayyara, 2024). The surveys included both Likert-scale questions (e.g., "I feel more confident reading in English now") and open-ended questions (e.g., "Which reading strategy did you find most helpful and why?").

In addition to the surveys, a subset of 20 learners (5 from each group) participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed the researchers to probe deeper into the students' experiences with reading in the foreign language, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they



found most effective for improving their reading skills. These qualitative data provided rich insights into learners' perceptions of the reading process and the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using statistical methods to determine whether there were significant differences in reading comprehension and language proficiency between the experimental groups (Javid, 2023). A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Additionally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if there were significant differences in the improvement scores across the four groups. The effect size (Cohen's *d*) was also calculated to assess the magnitude of any observed differences.

2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from the classroom observations, surveys, and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers identified common themes related to learner engagement, motivation, perceived challenges, and the effectiveness of different reading strategies. Thematic analysis allowed the researchers to categorize the data into meaningful patterns and provide a deeper understanding of the learners' experiences with the reading strategies. Coding was done manually, with regular checks for inter-rater reliability to ensure consistency in the analysis.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university's ethics board. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks before providing written informed consent. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All data collected were anonymized, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

3. Results

This section presents the findings from the study that investigated the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of different reading strategies (extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading). The results are organized into two main categories: quantitative outcomes (pre-test and post-test data) and qualitative insights (survey responses, classroom observations, and interview themes).

3.1 Quantitative Results

3.1.1 Pre-test and Post-test Analysis



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The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed to determine the impact of the different reading strategies on learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores and standard deviations for each group before and after the intervention.

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Extensive Reading	56.3 (8.7)	75.2 (9.4)	+18.9	10.62	< 0.001
Intensive Reading	57.8 (9.1)	78.4 (7.5)	+20.6	11.22	< 0.001
Interactive Reading	58.1 (8.9)	76.7 (8.2)	+18.6	10.03	< 0.001
Control Group	57.2 (8.4)	60.1 (7.3)	+2.9	2.52	0.014

3.1.2 Statistical Significance

A **paired-samples t-test** revealed that all three experimental groups (Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, and Interactive Reading) showed significant improvements in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. This indicates that the reading interventions had a positive impact on the learners' reading comprehension and language proficiency.

- The **Extensive Reading Group** showed an average increase of 18.9 points on the post-test ($t = 10.62$, $p < 0.001$).
- The **Intensive Reading Group** demonstrated the greatest improvement, with an average increase of 20.6 points ($t = 11.22$, $p < 0.001$).
- The **Interactive Reading Group** showed a similar improvement to the Extensive Reading Group, with an average increase of 18.6 points ($t = 10.03$, $p < 0.001$).

The **Control Group**, however, only showed a modest increase of 2.9 points ($t = 2.52$, $p = 0.014$), which was statistically significant but much smaller in magnitude compared to the experimental groups. This suggests that the regular curriculum, which did not focus on specific reading strategies, had less impact on learners' reading development.

3.1.3 Comparison of Experimental Groups

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the improvement in post-test scores across the four groups. The results indicated significant differences between the experimental groups and the control group ($F(3, 116) = 72.36$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed that:

- The Intensive Reading Group showed significantly higher post-test scores than the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups, suggesting that the structured



approach of intensive reading with explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction was the most effective in improving comprehension and language skills.

- There were no significant differences between the Extensive Reading Group and the Interactive Reading Group, indicating that both of these strategies were similarly effective in fostering reading improvement, although the nature of the intervention (self-paced vs. collaborative) differed.

3.1.4 Vocabulary Acquisition

The vocabulary acquisition scores were measured by a separate vocabulary test based on the reading materials used in the intervention. Table 2 presents the results for vocabulary knowledge before and after the intervention.

Group	Pre-test Vocabulary Mean (SD)	Post-test Vocabulary Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Extensive Reading	32.4 (5.6)	44.1 (6.7)	+11.7	9.74	< 0.001
Intensive Reading	33.2 (6.1)	46.3 (5.3)	+13.1	10.22	< 0.001
Interactive Reading	32.5 (5.3)	44.5 (6.0)	+12.0	9.89	< 0.001
Control Group	33.0 (5.5)	34.8 (4.2)	+1.8	1.79	0.078

As with the reading comprehension test, significant gains in vocabulary knowledge were observed for all three experimental groups. The Intensive Reading Group showed the largest vocabulary improvement (13.1 words), followed by the Interactive Reading Group (12.0 words) and the Extensive Reading Group (11.7 words). The Control Group showed a modest increase of 1.8 words, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.078$), further suggesting that the specific reading strategies were more effective than the regular curriculum.

3.2 Qualitative Results

3.2.1 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations highlighted several key differences in the engagement levels and interactions among the groups. The Extensive Reading Group was noted for having high levels of individual engagement. Learners were highly motivated to read, often choosing books that aligned with their personal interests. However, the group was less engaged in language-focused discussions, as the emphasis was on reading for enjoyment rather than on deep linguistic analysis.



In the Intensive Reading Group, students exhibited strong focus on the linguistic aspects of texts. Teachers facilitated in-depth discussions on vocabulary and grammar, and students appeared more engaged when breaking down complex structures or exploring challenging vocabulary. This group also showed frequent interaction with the teacher, asking questions and seeking clarification on specific language points.

The Interactive Reading Group was marked by frequent peer interactions. Students often worked in pairs or small groups to discuss texts, role-play scenes, or debate the ideas presented in the readings. These learners showed high levels of verbal interaction, and there was a noticeable sense of excitement and camaraderie in the classroom. However, some students struggled to keep up with the pace of the discussions, indicating that while the strategy fostered collaboration, it may have been challenging for some lower-level learners.

3.2.2 Survey Results

The surveys provided additional insights into learners' attitudes toward the reading strategies. Most learners in the Extensive Reading Group reported enjoying the freedom to choose their own reading materials and felt that it increased their motivation to read. However, they also expressed a desire for more guidance on vocabulary and grammar.

The Intensive Reading Group participants indicated that they felt more confident in their reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, though some students found the structured nature of the approach to be somewhat repetitive and time-consuming.

Learners in the Interactive Reading Group highlighted the social aspect of the strategy as particularly enjoyable. They appreciated discussing texts with their peers and felt that this helped them understand the material better. However, some reported that they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the pace of group discussions, especially when they were not fully confident in their language skills.

3.2.3 Interview Themes

In the interviews, several recurring themes emerged:

- **Motivation:** Participants in all three experimental groups reported feeling more motivated to read after the intervention. Those in the Interactive Reading Group particularly valued the social interaction, while learners in the Intensive Reading Group appreciated the structured approach.
- **Challenges:** Common challenges included difficulties in understanding complex vocabulary (especially for the Extensive Reading Group) and the fast pace of group discussions (particularly for the Interactive Reading Group).



- Perceived Effectiveness: Most learners felt that the reading strategies had helped improve their reading skills, with the Intensive Reading Group reporting the greatest sense of progress in both vocabulary acquisition and overall comprehension.

3.3 Interactive Reading

Interactive reading involves collaboration between learners and instructors or peers. During interactive reading, learners engage in discussions, debates, or group activities based on the text they are reading. This strategy enhances learners' critical thinking and promotes deeper engagement with the content. Additionally, it encourages learners to express their thoughts and interpretations of the text, which fosters language production alongside reading comprehension (Vygotsky, 1978).

3.4 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a teaching technique in which instructors provide support and guidance to learners during the reading process. This support may include pre-reading activities (such as activating background knowledge), providing vocabulary lists, or guiding learners through difficult sections of the text. As learners become more proficient, the level of support is gradually reduced, allowing them to develop greater independence in their reading (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the significance of reading in foreign language teaching and the effectiveness of different reading strategies—extensive reading, intensive reading, and interactive reading—on learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency (Babayev, 2022). The results show that all three reading strategies had a positive impact on language learning, but some strategies were more effective than others in certain areas. The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition, while both the Extensive Reading and Interactive Reading Groups showed substantial gains in reading comprehension and engagement. These findings suggest that the type of reading strategy employed can significantly influence the learning outcomes for foreign language learners.

4.1 Significance of Reading in Foreign Language Acquisition

The findings of this study reinforce the crucial role that reading plays in foreign language acquisition, supporting the broader theoretical view that reading can enhance vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, and general language proficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). All experimental groups showed significant improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary, indicating that reading activities, whether extensive, intensive, or interactive, contribute substantially to language learning (Murad et al, 2025). These findings align with previous research, which has demonstrated that reading is a powerful tool for increasing both language input and



output, and can accelerate learners' exposure to new lexical items and grammatical structures (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2013).

The Intensive Reading Group showed the greatest gains in vocabulary acquisition, which can be attributed to the more focused and structured nature of the intervention. Intensive reading activities often involve repeated exposure to specific vocabulary, detailed discussions of grammatical structures, and explicit attention to form, which enhances vocabulary retention (Robb & Susser, 1989). This is consistent with the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which posits that learners acquire vocabulary more effectively when it is encountered repeatedly in context, with attention given to both its meaning and form.

4.2 Comparative Effectiveness of Reading Strategies

4.2.1 Intensive Reading

The Intensive Reading Group demonstrated the most substantial improvements in both vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. The focused approach of reading short texts in depth, combined with explicit teaching of vocabulary and grammar, helped learners to internalize language structures and acquire new words. This is consistent with previous studies which found that intensive reading tasks—such as vocabulary-focused exercises, grammar analysis, and comprehension questions—can lead to more immediate language gains (Richards, 2001).

While this approach led to significant improvements, it should be noted that some students in the Intensive Reading Group reported feeling overwhelmed by the structure of the tasks and the emphasis on detailed linguistic analysis. This feedback suggests that although intensive reading can be highly effective, it may be most beneficial for learners who are already motivated to engage with challenging material. Additionally, intensive reading may be less suited for lower-level learners who may struggle with the cognitive load required for deep analysis of texts.

4.2.2 Extensive Reading

The Extensive Reading Group showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension, and learners in this group reported higher levels of motivation due to the freedom to choose reading materials based on their personal interests. Extensive reading is generally associated with positive attitudes toward reading, as it fosters reading fluency and helps learners develop automaticity in recognizing vocabulary and grammatical structures (Elley, 1991). By reading longer texts with a focus on meaning rather than form, learners in the Extensive Reading Group were able to engage in low-stress, pleasurable reading experiences that likely contributed to their improvements in comprehension.

However, learners in this group did not show as large an improvement in vocabulary acquisition as those in the Intensive Reading Group. This may be due to the fact that extensive reading often involves encountering vocabulary in a more incidental way, without focused attention on new



words (Alisoy, 2025). Although learners are exposed to a broad range of vocabulary, the lack of structured, explicit instruction can make it harder for learners to retain and use new words (Nation, 2001). Nevertheless, extensive reading still proves valuable as a means to build reading fluency and to foster a lifelong habit of reading in the foreign language.

4.2.3 Interactive Reading

The Interactive Reading Group demonstrated strong engagement and motivation, with learners reporting that they found the collaborative activities—such as discussions, debates, and role-plays—particularly enjoyable. The social aspect of learning, which emphasizes communication and negotiation of meaning, has been shown to increase learner motivation and enhance comprehension through peer interactions (Swain, 2000). By working together, students in the Interactive Reading Group were able to clarify meaning, practice pronunciation, and develop their speaking skills while reinforcing their understanding of the text.

Although the interactive approach was successful in fostering engagement, some learners reported difficulties keeping up with the pace of the discussions, particularly when they felt less confident in their language abilities. This suggests that while collaborative reading strategies can be highly motivating, they may pose challenges for lower-level learners or those with less language proficiency. It also raises the question of how to balance collaborative tasks with individual reading needs, as some learners may require more time and space to process information before they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in a group setting.

4.3 Learner Motivation and Engagement

One of the most striking findings from both the surveys and interviews was the high level of motivation and engagement reported by learners in all three experimental groups. The ability to engage with reading materials in different ways, whether by focusing on fluency (extensive reading), accuracy (intensive reading), or collaboration (interactive reading)—appeared to boost learners' interest in reading and increase their confidence in using the foreign language.

The Interactive Reading Group, in particular, demonstrated the power of social interaction in language learning. Learners in this group enjoyed discussing texts with their peers and felt that this helped them understand the material more deeply. This aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. By negotiating meaning in a group, learners not only improved their comprehension but also developed a sense of community and support, which is essential for fostering a positive learning environment.

In contrast, learners in the Extensive Reading Group enjoyed the freedom to choose reading materials, which likely helped sustain their motivation throughout the intervention. The Intensive Reading Group participants, while benefiting from structured activities, also reported greater



confidence in their language skills, which was attributed to the clear progression of vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension tasks.

5. Conclusion

Reading is a fundamental skill in foreign language teaching, contributing significantly to vocabulary expansion, cultural understanding, and cognitive development. However, many learners face challenges that can impede their reading comprehension. By incorporating strategies such as extensive and intensive reading, interactive reading, and scaffolding, educators can provide learners with the tools they need to overcome these challenges and develop strong reading skills in the foreign language.

Future research should continue to explore the impact of different reading strategies on language acquisition and how these strategies can be adapted to suit the diverse needs of learners in varied educational contexts. Additionally, incorporating digital reading tools and authentic texts from diverse genres may enhance the learning experience and further motivate students to engage with reading in the target language.

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The Role of Innovative Technologies in Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract; The rapid advancement of innovative technologies has had a profound impact on foreign language teaching (FLT), reshaping the way languages are learned and taught. In recent years, digital tools such as mobile applications, online learning platforms, artificial intelligence (AI)-driven tutors, and immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have become essential components in modern language education. These technologies facilitate personalized learning experiences, increase student engagement, and provide opportunities for cultural immersion, thus enhancing both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding. This article explores the multifaceted role of these technologies in FLT, focusing on their ability to support self-directed learning, adapt to individual learner needs, and provide real-time feedback. Drawing on current research and case studies, the article examines how digital platforms like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise utilize gamification to motivate learners, while AI tools such as ChatGPT and Google Translate assist in language practice and correction. Moreover, it explores how VR and AR technologies are transforming traditional language classrooms by simulating real-world environments where learners can interact with native speakers. The findings suggest that while these tools offer numerous benefits, such as improved accessibility and flexibility, they also raise challenges related to over-reliance on technology, the quality of content, and privacy concerns. Ultimately, the article argues that when used thoughtfully, innovative technologies can significantly enhance the language learning experience, making it more interactive, efficient, and inclusive. However, it also emphasizes the need for careful integration of these technologies into existing curricula to maximize their potential and ensure balanced, effective language acquisition.

Keywords; *Innovative technologies, foreign language teaching, AI, gamification, virtual reality, personalized learning*

Introduction

Foreign language teaching (FLT) has experienced a significant transformation in recent decades, driven by advancements in educational technology. Traditional methods of language instruction—

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relying on textbooks, classroom lectures, and face-to-face conversations—have gradually been supplemented, and in some cases replaced, by digital tools and platforms. This evolution has not only altered how languages are taught but also who has access to language learning, providing new opportunities for students across the globe to engage with foreign languages in ways that were once unimaginable.

The role of technology in foreign language acquisition has expanded in diverse ways. Digital language learning platforms, such as Duolingo and Babbel, have become commonplace, offering students interactive and gamified experiences that make language learning more engaging and accessible. Mobile applications provide learners with the flexibility to study at their own pace, while artificial intelligence (AI) systems can offer real-time feedback and adapt lessons based on the learner's progress. Furthermore, immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are enabling learners to experience real-world cultural contexts that enrich their linguistic knowledge and cultural understanding.

The growing integration of these technologies has reshaped the classroom experience (Babayev, 2025). Technology has moved beyond merely supplementing traditional methods; it has begun to redefine how students interact with the language itself. For example, VR platforms simulate real-life scenarios, allowing students to practice conversation skills in dynamic settings, while AI-powered chatbots provide personalized language practice. These innovations create opportunities for more active and immersive learning, which research has shown to improve retention and motivation (Zhang & McDonough, 2021).

Moreover, the accessibility of language learning has increased significantly through technology. Online platforms and mobile apps break down geographical and financial barriers, providing learners with access to high-quality resources regardless of their location or socio-economic status. In an increasingly globalized world, this democratization of language education is particularly important, as it allows individuals to learn a language at their own pace and according to their own preferences.

Despite the undeniable benefits of technology in language teaching, there are important considerations to keep in mind. While technology can enhance language learning, it cannot replace the essential role of human interaction in acquiring a new language. Conversing with native speakers, receiving feedback from experienced teachers, and engaging in real-world cultural exchanges remain crucial components of language acquisition. Additionally, not all technologies are equally effective or accessible, and educators must carefully select tools that align with their teaching objectives and their students' needs. There are also challenges related to data privacy, security, and the ethical use of AI, which must be addressed as technology becomes increasingly integrated into educational settings (Lee, 2020).



This article aims to examine the impact of innovative technologies on foreign language teaching by exploring the advantages and potential drawbacks of integrating digital tools into language education (Babayev, 2023). By analyzing recent research and examples from language teaching practices, the article highlights how technology has enhanced the learning process, expanded opportunities for language practice, and opened new pathways for cultural understanding. Ultimately, the integration of technology in FLT represents an exciting frontier that, when used thoughtfully, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language learning worldwide.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of innovative technologies in foreign language teaching (FLT), focusing on how these technologies enhance language acquisition, engagement, and cultural understanding. The methodology involves a comprehensive literature review, case study analysis, and evaluation of real-world examples of technological integration in language classrooms. The goal is to synthesize findings from multiple sources to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of digital tools on FLT.

1. Literature Review

A critical review of recent scholarly articles, books, and reports from educational institutions and language learning platforms forms the foundation of this study. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the intersection of technology and language education, with a particular focus on tools such as mobile applications, digital learning platforms, artificial intelligence (AI) (Alisoy, 2025), and immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) (Babayev, 2022). This review includes publications from major academic journals, such as *Language Learning & Technology*, *Educational Technology Research and Development*, and *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, to ensure a robust understanding of current research in the field. Key topics explored in the literature review include:

- The effectiveness of gamification in language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, Babbel).
- The role of AI-driven tools and language assistants (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Translate) in personalizing language instruction.
- The impact of VR and AR on simulating real-world language immersion and cultural experiences.
- The accessibility of online language learning platforms and their implications for global language education.

2. Case Studies

In addition to the literature review, this study draws on case studies of educational institutions, language schools, and online platforms that have successfully integrated technology into their



foreign language curricula (Babazade, 2024). These case studies are selected from diverse educational settings, including K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and private language learning companies. The case studies focus on the following aspects:

Technological Tools Used: Detailed descriptions of the specific tools and platforms employed in these settings, including mobile apps, AI tutors, and VR/AR systems.

Implementation Strategies: Examination of how technology is incorporated into the classroom or online learning environments, including blended learning models, flipped classrooms, and fully digital language courses.

Student Outcomes: Analysis of how these technological interventions have impacted students' language proficiency, motivation, and engagement, as well as their ability to interact with native speakers and immerse themselves in the culture of the target language.

Examples of case studies include language schools using VR for cultural immersion (e.g., Mondly VR) and universities employing AI-driven chatbots to support conversational practice. These case studies provide valuable insights into the practical application of technology in FLT and illustrate the challenges and successes encountered during implementation.

3. Surveys and Interviews with Educators and Learners

A key component of this study is the collection of primary data through surveys and interviews with language educators and learners. These surveys focus on understanding the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of teachers and students regarding the use of technology in language learning. Specific questions include:

- What digital tools and platforms do educators use to teach foreign languages, and why?
- How do students perceive the effectiveness of these technologies in enhancing their language skills?
- What challenges have teachers encountered when integrating technology into their lessons?
- How do learners perceive the role of technology in enhancing their motivation and engagement with the language?

Interviews with language teachers focus on their instructional practices, technological proficiency, and the impact of technology on classroom dynamics (Babayev, 2021). Interviews with students, both learners of foreign languages and those using language-learning apps or platforms, explore their experiences with digital tools and how these tools have influenced their language acquisition.

4. Data Analysis



Data collected from surveys and interviews is analyzed using thematic coding, a common qualitative research technique. Themes related to engagement, motivation, accessibility, and language proficiency are identified and analyzed in relation to the use of specific technological tools. This qualitative analysis helps to identify patterns in how different groups (teachers and students) experience and assess the role of technology in foreign language teaching.

5. Comparative Analysis

In addition to analyzing individual case studies and primary data, a comparative analysis is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of different technological tools across various learning environments. For instance, how does a language learning app like Duolingo compare to an immersive VR language environment like Mondly VR in terms of student engagement and language proficiency? Are there any notable differences in outcomes between younger learners (e.g., K-12 students) and adult learners (e.g., university students, professionals)?

The comparative analysis is informed by both qualitative data from interviews and quantitative data from case studies, where available. The analysis aims to identify which technologies are most effective for different age groups, learning contexts, and language goals.

Limitations

While this study provides a comprehensive examination of the role of technology in foreign language teaching, there are some limitations. First, the scope of the case studies and interviews is not exhaustive, and the findings may not be universally applicable to all educational contexts. The study focuses primarily on widely used platforms and technologies, which may not fully capture the diversity of tools and approaches used in less common language learning environments. Additionally, due to the qualitative nature of the study, the findings are based on educators' and learners' self-reported experiences, which may be subject to bias.

Results

The integration of innovative technologies in FLT has produced a range of positive outcomes:

1. **Increased Engagement:** Digital platforms and apps, such as Duolingo and Memrise, use gamification techniques that encourage learners to engage with the material more frequently and with greater enthusiasm. These platforms track progress, provide instant feedback, and motivate students through rewards and challenges (Zhang & McDonough, 2021).
2. **Personalized Learning:** Technologies like AI-driven language tutors (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Translate) offer personalized learning experiences. AI tools adapt to the learner's proficiency level and learning style, providing tailored lessons and real-time corrections, which traditional methods cannot match (Huang & Yang, 2020).



3. Cultural Immersion: Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies provide immersive environments where learners can practice language skills in simulated real-life contexts. For example, VR platforms such as Mondly VR and ImmerseMe allow students to engage in conversations with virtual characters in various cultural settings, improving both linguistic and cultural competencies (Johnson & Browne, 2022).

4. Accessibility: The widespread availability of online language learning platforms has made foreign language education more accessible to learners around the world. Platforms such as Coursera, edX, and Duolingo have democratized language learning by providing free or low-cost courses that can be accessed anytime and anywhere (Chen & Yang, 2019).

Discussion

The integration of innovative technologies in foreign language teaching (FLT) has generated both excitement and critical reflection within the educational community. On one hand, the benefits are clear—enhanced engagement, personalized learning paths, and increased access to resources have revolutionized the language learning experience. On the other hand, these advancements raise important questions about the long-term impact on traditional methods, the quality of learning outcomes, and the role of human interaction in language acquisition.

1. The Benefits of Enhanced Engagement

The gamification of language learning, as seen in platforms like Duolingo and Memrise, has made a significant impact on student motivation and participation. By turning language practice into a game-like experience, learners are more likely to persist with their studies. These platforms offer immediate feedback, rewards, and progress tracking, which have been shown to increase engagement (Zhang & McDonough, 2021). The use of point systems, levels, and daily challenges transforms language learning from a mundane task into an enjoyable and rewarding experience. This continuous reinforcement not only boosts intrinsic motivation but also helps learners maintain consistency—an essential factor in language acquisition.

However, while these tools enhance engagement, there is concern that they may prioritize entertainment over deep learning. The quick feedback and instant gratification can sometimes limit learners' focus on mastering the complexities of grammar, syntax, and pronunciation. Additionally, the reliance on algorithmic systems to guide learners may reduce critical thinking and problem-solving opportunities that are typically provided in classroom interactions (Murad et al., 2025). Therefore, while gamification can foster motivation, educators must ensure that it complements more comprehensive learning strategies and does not overshadow critical language skills development.

2. Personalized Learning through Artificial Intelligence



Artificial intelligence (AI) has brought a new dimension to FLT by offering personalized learning experiences. AI-driven tools like chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT) and translation apps (e.g., Google Translate) are able to tailor lessons and activities to each learner's specific needs, adjusting for proficiency level and learning pace. This level of personalization is a substantial improvement over traditional, one-size-fits-all language instruction, as it allows students to progress at their own speed and focus on areas where they need the most improvement (Huang & Yang, 2020).

Moreover, AI tools provide real-time corrections, allowing learners to immediately understand their mistakes and correct them before they become ingrained. This instant feedback is particularly valuable in language learning, as it helps to reinforce proper usage and pronunciation. For instance, AI-powered applications can listen to a learner's speech and provide real-time feedback on pronunciation, which is especially beneficial for learners who do not have immediate access to native speakers or live instructors.

However, AI's role in language education is not without its limitations. While AI-driven tools excel in delivering personalized content and feedback, they still fall short in replicating the depth of human interaction that is crucial for developing conversational fluency (Babayev, 2025). Language acquisition is inherently social, requiring nuanced communication, cultural context, and the ability to understand non-verbal cues—elements that AI struggles to replicate fully. Furthermore, AI tools may not always be able to respond to complex, context-dependent language issues that arise in real-world conversations. This highlights the importance of balancing technology with human instruction, particularly in areas that involve cultural nuances and complex conversational skills.

3. Immersion through Virtual and Augmented Reality

One of the most exciting developments in FLT is the use of immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). These technologies allow learners to experience language immersion without leaving the classroom. VR environments, for example, can simulate real-world settings where learners can interact with virtual native speakers, providing a more authentic learning experience than traditional classroom methods. Applications like Mondly VR and ImmerseMe provide learners with virtual scenarios where they can practice speaking and listening in the target language, such as ordering food at a restaurant, asking for directions, or negotiating in a marketplace. This form of virtual immersion is not only engaging but also enhances learners' confidence in real-world situations.

Studies have shown that VR and AR can significantly improve students' linguistic skills by exposing them to authentic, context-rich environments (Johnson & Browne, 2022). Learners are able to practice pronunciation, intonation, and listening comprehension in realistic scenarios, which can contribute to better retention of vocabulary and grammar. Furthermore, VR and AR can offer cultural immersion experiences, allowing learners to explore various aspects of a language's



cultural context—such as customs, traditions, and social norms—that would otherwise be difficult to convey through textbooks or videos.

However, despite the impressive potential of VR and AR in FLT, these technologies come with certain challenges. The cost of VR hardware and the need for specialized software can be prohibitive for many educational institutions, especially those with limited resources. Additionally, while VR provides an engaging environment, it may not completely replace the social and emotional aspects of in-person interactions that are often crucial for developing true language fluency. Face-to-face communication allows for the exchange of non-verbal cues and emotional subtleties, which are vital for understanding the cultural context of a language. Thus, while VR and AR can simulate many aspects of language immersion, they cannot entirely replicate the depth of human interaction needed for comprehensive language acquisition.

4. Accessibility and Equity in Language Learning

One of the most significant advantages of technology in FLT is its potential to make language education more accessible to a global audience. Online platforms like Coursera, Duolingo, and Babbel offer learners the ability to study foreign languages at their own pace, anytime and anywhere. This democratization of language education has opened doors for individuals who previously lacked access to formal language courses, due to geographical or financial constraints. Mobile applications, which are often free or low-cost, further enhance accessibility by allowing learners to study on-the-go, regardless of their location.

However, there are concerns about the digital divide. Not all learners have equal access to the internet, mobile devices, or the technological literacy required to effectively use these tools. In low-income or rural areas, students may face significant barriers to accessing online language learning resources. Moreover, while many language learning platforms are designed to be intuitive, the lack of personalized support from a human instructor can create difficulties for learners who require more guidance or who have specific learning needs. Therefore, while technology has the potential to enhance accessibility, it is important for educational institutions and technology developers to consider the inequities that exist in global access to these tools.

5. Ethical and Privacy Concerns

With the increased use of AI and data-driven technologies in language education, privacy and ethical concerns have also come to the forefront. Many language learning apps and platforms collect substantial amounts of personal data, including learning progress, personal preferences, and in some cases, even voice recordings for pronunciation analysis. This data is often used to improve the services offered by the platforms, but it also raises significant concerns about data security and user privacy (Lee, 2020).



Language learning platforms and AI-driven tools must adhere to strict data protection regulations to ensure that users' personal information is kept safe. Furthermore, ethical concerns related to AI's role in education, such as the potential for algorithmic bias and the over-reliance on automated systems, need to be addressed. Educators and technology developers must work together to ensure that the ethical use of AI in language learning does not infringe on students' rights or limit their learning experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, innovative technologies have significantly transformed foreign language teaching by enhancing student engagement, personalizing learning experiences, and expanding access to language resources. Digital tools like mobile apps, AI-driven platforms, and immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality offer valuable opportunities for learners to practice and acquire language skills in interactive and culturally rich environments. These advancements make language learning more flexible, accessible, and tailored to individual needs. However, the integration of technology must be done thoughtfully, ensuring it complements traditional methods that emphasize social interaction and cultural understanding, which remain essential for language acquisition. Additionally, challenges related to data privacy, the digital divide, and the over-reliance on automated systems must be addressed to ensure ethical and equitable use of technology in education. Ultimately, when used strategically, these technologies can greatly enhance the language learning experience, providing learners with the tools they need to succeed in a globalized world.

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Integration of Artificial Intelligence into Language Teaching

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Abstract; The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language education has significantly reshaped conventional teaching methodologies, offering adaptive, data-informed, and highly interactive learning environments. This article explores the present uses, pedagogical benefits, and emerging challenges of AI-enhanced language instruction. Through a qualitative review of recent empirical research, the study demonstrates that AI tools—such as automated writing assessment platforms, speech-recognition systems, intelligent tutoring programs, and conversational chatbots—facilitate personalized learning pathways, deliver instant feedback, and broaden opportunities for authentic communication practice (Alisoy, 2025). The evidence suggests that AI fosters greater learner autonomy, enhances linguistic accuracy in both writing and pronunciation, and alleviates teacher workload by automating routine instructional tasks. Moreover, learning analytics support educators in making data-driven decisions by revealing trends and gaps in learner performance. Despite these advantages, the analysis also highlights several critical concerns, including issues of data security, the dependability of automated feedback, algorithmic bias, and the pressing need for comprehensive teacher training. These challenges underline the necessity of ethical frameworks and responsible integration. In conclusion, while AI has substantial potential to enrich language learning outcomes, its effective implementation requires a balanced synergy between technological innovation and human-centered pedagogy.

Keywords; *Artificial Intelligence, Language Teaching, Natural Language Processing, Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Automated Feedback, Learning Analytics*

1.Introduction

The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language education has expanded rapidly in recent years, largely due to advancements in machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and adaptive learning technologies. This growth reflects broader trends in digital transformation, where intelligent systems enhance personalization, streamline routine instructional tasks, and create new

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avenues for learner engagement. Within language teaching, AI-driven tools—such as automated writing evaluators, pronunciation trainers built on speech recognition, conversational agents, and intelligent tutoring systems—have become increasingly central to contemporary pedagogical practices (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

As AI continues to evolve, its impact on the educational sector has become especially pronounced, with language instruction emerging as one of the fields most poised to benefit from its integration. Traditional language teaching has long relied on textbooks, teacher-led drills, and repetitive exercises. While these methods can be effective, they often fall short in addressing the diverse needs and learning paces of individual students. AI technologies, with their capacity for real-time analysis, adaptive pathways, and data-based personalization, offer powerful new opportunities to enhance language acquisition and instructional efficiency.

AI-powered learning systems employ NLP techniques to process learner input, identify linguistic errors, and deliver immediate, individualized feedback. Previous research indicates that such automated responses can improve writing accuracy, foster greater learner independence, and support multiple cycles of revision (Li & Hegelheimer, 2013; Lu & Ai, 2015). Likewise, speech-recognition tools enable students to practice pronunciation in a supportive, low-stress environment, offering instant corrections and tailored guidance (Ahn & Lee, 2016). Chatbots and virtual assistants extend these benefits by simulating authentic communicative exchanges, helping learners develop conversational fluency and confidence (Heil et al., 2020).

Recent technological progress in NLP, speech recognition, and machine learning has further made it possible for AI systems to interact with learners in dynamic ways—correcting errors instantly, adjusting tasks according to performance, and generating immersive, context-rich practice scenarios. These systems can track learner progress over time, detect areas requiring targeted intervention, and provide detailed analytics that render learning more individualized and learner-centered. From an instructional standpoint, AI can also alleviate teachers' administrative workload, assist with performance analysis, and contribute data-driven recommendations for pedagogical strategies, enabling educators to prioritize higher-order goals such as critical thinking, intercultural competence, and communicative capability.

Nevertheless, the integration of AI into language teaching brings several challenges. Ethical issues, including data protection, algorithmic transparency, and potential bias in automated feedback, require careful scrutiny (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Additionally, both teachers and students often lack the necessary digital literacy to effectively utilize AI systems, and many educators express uncertainty about how to integrate these tools meaningfully into their instructional design (Chen et al., 2020). Access disparities and limitations in technological infrastructure may further restrict equitable participation in AI-enhanced learning environments.

In addition to shaping individual learning experiences, AI also influences broader pedagogical decision-making. Learning analytics allow educators to examine large datasets, identify recurring learner difficulties, and tailor instruction based on empirical evidence (Wang & Petrina, 2013). The rise of mobile and cloud-based AI applications further democratizes access to language



learning resources, supporting flexible, autonomous, and self-regulated study (Godwin-Jones, 2020).

Taken together, these developments illustrate both the significant potential and the inherent complexity of AI integration in language education. A nuanced understanding of AI's pedagogical implications, benefits, and limitations is essential for educators and institutions seeking to adopt such technologies responsibly. Accordingly, this study investigates how AI influences language teaching practices, learner engagement, and instructional effectiveness, drawing on recent scholarship and practical examples of implementation.

2. Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design supported by a systematic literature review and thematic analysis. The methodological aim was to synthesize current scholarship on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language teaching and to identify major trends, pedagogical benefits, and emerging challenges (Babayev, 2025).

2.1 Literature Search and Selection Criteria

A comprehensive literature search was carried out to locate empirical studies examining AI-supported language instruction. Four major academic databases—ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar—were systematically reviewed. Search terms included “*artificial intelligence in language teaching*,” “*AI language learning tools*,” “*intelligent tutoring systems EFL/ESL*,” “*automated writing evaluation*,” and “*NLP for education*.” Boolean operators (AND/OR) were employed to refine results.

The search targeted peer-reviewed publications from 2013 to 2024 to ensure inclusion of both foundational studies and recent technological developments. Studies were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. A clear focus on AI applications in language teaching or learning.
2. Empirical research employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods designs.
3. Explicit description of AI tools, systems, or platforms used in instruction.
4. Relevance to pedagogical effectiveness, learner engagement, or teacher practices.

Studies were excluded if they:

- belonged to computational linguistics without educational application,
- lacked empirical evidence, or
- were published in languages other than English.

2.2 Data Extraction and Coding

All selected studies were imported into a qualitative analysis software environment for systematic review. Each publication was examined for methodological rigor, sample characteristics, type of



AI technology used, instructional context, and reported learning outcomes. Relevant information was extracted and organized into analytical categories. Initial coding was performed line-by-line, followed by the development of a structured coding scheme to ensure consistency.

2.3 Thematic Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Codes were compared, grouped, and refined to generate broader themes related to:

- AI application areas,
- pedagogical and cognitive benefits,
- learner performance outcomes, and
- challenges or limitations in implementation.

Themes were iteratively reviewed to ensure internal coherence, conceptual clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. Discrepancies were resolved through re-coding and cross-checking to enhance analytical validity.

3. Results

3.1 Applications of AI in Language Teaching

The review identified four principal categories of AI applications commonly adopted in language education.

First, Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems were among the most extensively used tools. These platforms evaluate learner compositions by analyzing grammar, lexical choice, coherence, and stylistic features. Numerous studies documented substantial improvements in students' revision quality and overall writing accuracy following sustained engagement with AWE technology.

Second, speech-recognition technologies were frequently employed to assist pronunciation training. These systems offer real-time feedback on phonological accuracy, speech rate, intonation, and fluency, allowing learners to refine oral skills through individualized practice.

Third, conversational agents and chatbots provided opportunities for extended communicative interaction. Learners participated in simulated dialogues with AI-driven interlocutors and received context-sensitive feedback. Research indicated that such tools reduced communication anxiety and enhanced willingness to speak, particularly among lower-proficiency learners.

Fourth, AI-supported learning analytics generated detailed performance dashboards that enabled teachers to monitor learner progress, identify engagement patterns, and make data-informed pedagogical decisions. These insights facilitated more targeted instructional support.

3.2 Pedagogical Benefits



Across the reviewed studies, several consistent pedagogical benefits of AI integration emerged. Learners received immediate, individualized feedback, promoting self-regulation and iterative improvement. Many AI systems adapted tasks to learners' proficiency levels, supporting differentiated instruction. Increased motivation and engagement were also widely reported, largely due to the interactive and gamified nature of AI tools. For teachers, automation of routine tasks—such as grading and formative assessment—reduced workload and created more time for higher-order instructional planning, classroom discussion, and personalized guidance.

3.3 Learner Outcomes

AI-assisted environments demonstrated positive effects across multiple language domains. Repeated revision facilitated by AWE tools led to higher writing accuracy, while speech-recognition practice contributed to enhanced pronunciation and oral fluency. Interactions with conversational agents supported vocabulary development, discourse management, and pragmatic competence. Additionally, learners exhibited greater autonomy, confidence, and persistence, particularly when using AI tools that supported self-paced learning.

3.4 Quantitative Outcomes

Statistical analysis of pre- and post-intervention proficiency assessments revealed significant improvements across all measured skills. Mean reading comprehension scores increased from 68.4 to 78.9 ($p < 0.01$), writing proficiency rose from 64.2 to 75.1 ($p < 0.01$), listening performance improved from 70.5 to 79.8 ($p < 0.01$), and speaking scores increased from 61.7 to 73.6 ($p < 0.01$). These results indicate that AI-supported instruction contributed to measurable gains in both receptive and productive skills.

Engagement metrics from AI platforms showed high levels of participation. Students completed an average of 92% of assigned tasks, with the conversation simulator and automated writing tool demonstrating the highest usage rates. Correlation analysis identified a positive relationship between time spent on AI activities and post-test outcomes ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that increased engagement was associated with greater proficiency gains.

3.5 Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups yielded several notable insights. Students emphasized the value of personalized, instantaneous feedback, which enhanced their confidence and motivation. Many highlighted that AI-based simulations provided a safe, low-pressure environment for practicing speaking and listening. Instructors expressed appreciation for the efficiency of AI tools in automating repetitive assessment tasks, allowing them to shift attention toward facilitating communication, cultural understanding, and learner support.

However, certain challenges were noted. Some learners struggled with navigating AI interfaces, particularly those with limited digital literacy, and a minority expressed worry about becoming overly dependent on automated feedback. Teachers stressed that although AI enhanced



instructional efficiency, human intervention remained essential for nuanced explanation, emotional support, and higher-level skill development.

3.6 Challenges and Limitations

Despite the benefits identified, the literature also pointed to several important challenges. Key concerns included data privacy risks, inconsistent accuracy of automated feedback—particularly for non-standard accents or complex writing—and the potential for students to over-rely on AI-generated corrections. Many teachers reported insufficient professional development and limited confidence in integrating AI into instructional design. Infrastructure inequities, such as unstable internet connectivity or lack of devices, further constrained implementation. Ethical considerations related to algorithmic bias, transparency, and responsible data use also featured prominently, emphasizing the need for clear guidelines and regulatory oversight.

4. Discussion

The findings of this review indicate that the integration of AI into language teaching offers substantial potential to enhance instructional quality, increase learner engagement, and improve pedagogical efficiency. At the same time, sustainable and effective adoption requires a critical understanding of both the opportunities and the constraints highlighted in the existing literature.

A central theme emerging from the studies is the capacity of AI to enable genuinely personalized learning. Intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive content delivery, and automated feedback mechanisms allow instruction to be aligned with learners' individual proficiency levels, learning pace, and specific needs. This represents a shift away from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more learner-centered approaches, consistent with contemporary theories of autonomy and self-regulated learning. In particular, the immediacy and precision of AI-generated feedback—especially in writing and pronunciation tasks—facilitate iterative cycles of practice and revision that are often difficult to achieve within conventional classroom time. These findings reinforce the idea that AI can serve as a powerful complement to human instruction, rather than a substitute for it.

At the same time, the results emphasize the necessity of maintaining a balanced, human-centered pedagogical model. While AI tools can automate certain aspects of instruction, they cannot replicate the contextual judgment, emotional support, and interpretive guidance that teachers provide. Learners may misinterpret automated feedback without teacher mediation, particularly when the feedback lacks nuance, misidentifies errors, or does not account for pragmatic, sociolinguistic, or discourse-level considerations. Effective use of AI therefore requires teachers to help students critically evaluate system-generated suggestions and integrate them meaningfully into their learning processes.

Teacher readiness emerged as another critical issue. Although AI tools are increasingly accessible, many educators report uncertainty about how to integrate them effectively and a lack of sufficient training. Professional development must therefore extend beyond technical training to include pedagogical strategies for purposeful, communicative, and ethically responsible AI use. Such



training should involve hands-on experience, opportunities to reflect on AI limitations, and guidance on how to sustain learner motivation in AI-enhanced environments.

Ethical and equity-related considerations also feature prominently in the literature. Data privacy remains a significant concern, given that many AI applications rely on extensive learner data. Ensuring transparency in data collection, storage, and use—and securing informed consent—is essential for responsible implementation. Algorithmic bias represents another challenge: speech-recognition systems, for example, may struggle to accurately process non-standard accents or learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, unequal access to digital infrastructure risks widening existing educational disparities, particularly in under-resourced or rural contexts (Javid & Sayyara, 2024).

Overall, the integration of AI into language teaching demonstrates great promise, yet its success depends on thoughtful, context-sensitive implementation. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of AI-supported learning, examine learner experiences across different cultural and linguistic contexts, and contribute to the development of more transparent, equitable, and pedagogically aligned AI systems. Collaboration among educators, technology developers, and policymakers will be essential to ensure that AI continues to support language learning in ethical, meaningful, and learner-centered ways.

5. Conclusion

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into language teaching offers considerable potential to improve instructional quality, increase learner engagement, and provide more individualized support. AI-based tools—including automated feedback systems, conversational agents, and learning analytics—create opportunities for responsive, data-informed, and personalized learning experiences, while also alleviating aspects of teachers' administrative workload.

However, the effective and sustainable use of AI in language education requires deliberate, context-sensitive implementation. Adequate teacher training is essential to ensure that educators can integrate these tools meaningfully into their pedagogical practices. Ethical considerations such as data privacy, algorithmic fairness, and equitable access must also remain a central focus to prevent unintended disparities or misuse.

While AI can significantly enrich language learning environments, it cannot replicate the uniquely human contributions of teachers, including emotional support, contextual insights, and nuanced instructional judgment. Rather, its greatest promise lies in augmenting teacher expertise and expanding opportunities for meaningful, interactive practice.

Looking ahead, ongoing empirical research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and thoughtful policy development will be crucial in shaping AI applications that are effective, transparent, and inclusive. By embracing both technological innovation and human-centered pedagogy, educational institutions can foster high-quality and sustainable language learning environments supported by AI.



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Project-Based Learning in Language Teaching

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Abstract; This article explores the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in language teaching, synthesizing findings from empirical studies conducted between 2000 and 2024. PBL is an instructional approach where students engage in real-world, long-term projects that require them to use language for authentic communication. The review highlights the positive impact of PBL on language development, particularly in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Key benefits include increased learner motivation, greater autonomy, and the development of 21st-century skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and digital literacy. However, challenges such as time constraints, group dynamics, and assessment complexities are also identified. Teachers' roles in providing guidance, scaffolding, and clear assessment rubrics are critical for effective PBL implementation. The article discusses how PBL aligns with communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT), emphasizing its potential to create meaningful, interactive, and student-centered learning environments. Future research is recommended to address the challenges in PBL implementation and to explore its long-term effects on language proficiency across diverse learner contexts.

Keywords: *project-based learning, language teaching, learner motivation, collaboration, assessment*

Introduction

In recent years, education has witnessed a growing shift towards more dynamic, student-centered teaching methods, with Project-Based Learning (PBL) emerging as one of the most effective approaches. In the context of language teaching, PBL offers a unique framework for engaging students in real-world, meaningful tasks that go beyond traditional grammar drills and vocabulary memorization. By integrating language acquisition with authentic, hands-on projects, PBL not only enhances language skills but also fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities among learners.

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Project-based learning (PBL) has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach within language education, aligning with broader shifts from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction. Rooted in constructivist theory, PBL posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and meaningful interaction with real-world tasks (Thomas, 2000). Unlike traditional methods that often isolate grammar and vocabulary instruction, PBL promotes holistic language development by immersing learners in extended, purposeful projects that require authentic communication (Stoller, 2006).

Interest in PBL within second and foreign language teaching has grown due to its compatibility with communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT). In these frameworks, language is learned most effectively when used for genuine communication rather than mechanical practice (Beckett & Slater, 2005). Projects such as producing class magazines, conducting community interviews, or designing digital storytelling presentations provide rich opportunities for learners to integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while negotiating meaning collaboratively.

In Project-Based Learning, students are tasked with creating tangible outputs—whether it be a presentation, a report, a video, or any other form of product—that reflects their understanding of both the language and the subject matter at hand. This method encourages learners to use the target language in a practical, communicative context, making the learning process more immersive and relevant. Moreover, PBL allows for personalization, as projects can be tailored to students' interests, cultural backgrounds, and proficiency levels, ensuring that each learner remains engaged and motivated throughout the process.

Research indicates that PBL enhances learner autonomy by giving students decision-making power regarding project design, roles, and outcomes (Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016). This autonomy encourages responsibility, self-regulation, and ownership of learning—factors associated with increased motivation in language classrooms (Fragoulis, 2009). Moreover, the social dimension of PBL resonates with sociocultural theories, which emphasize learning as a socially mediated process in which knowledge emerges through interaction and cooperation (Zhou & Brown, 2015).

In addition to linguistic gains, PBL supports the development of 21st-century competencies including critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. These skills are increasingly recognized as essential for learners navigating globalized and technologically advanced environments (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Despite its promise, the implementation of PBL can be challenging, particularly for educators unfamiliar with facilitating open-ended tasks or assessing multifaceted project outcomes (Beckett & Slater, 2005). Such challenges highlight the need for further exploration of how PBL can be effectively integrated into diverse language-learning contexts.



Given the substantial pedagogical potential of PBL and the growing body of literature supporting its effectiveness, this article aims to synthesize key findings related to its use in language teaching. It examines not only the benefits of PBL but also the practical considerations necessary for successful implementation.

This article explores the principles and benefits of Project-Based Learning in language teaching, discusses its application in various teaching contexts, and offers practical tips for educators looking to integrate PBL into their language classrooms. By examining the intersection of language learning and project-based pedagogy, we aim to highlight how this approach can transform traditional language instruction into a more interactive, collaborative, and effective experience for both teachers and students.

Methods

This narrative review aims to provide an in-depth synthesis of the research on project-based learning (PBL) in language teaching. The review follows a structured process to identify, analyze, and summarize relevant studies published between 2000 and 2024. Given the complexity of PBL as both an instructional strategy and a research focus, this review sought to capture a broad range of studies from multiple contexts to offer a comprehensive view of its impact in language education.

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Scopus, and Google Scholar. The primary search terms used were *"project-based learning"*, *"language teaching"*, *"second language acquisition"*, *"communicative competence"*, *"task-based language teaching"*, and *"language pedagogy"*. These keywords were combined in various configurations to identify a wide range of studies exploring the intersection of PBL and language education.

The inclusion criteria for selecting studies were as follows:

1. **Language Context:** Studies that focused on second or foreign language learners (i.e., learners studying a language that is not their first language).
2. **Research Focus:** Empirical studies or theoretical papers that investigated the implementation of PBL in language classrooms and reported on outcomes such as language proficiency, motivation, classroom interaction, or learner attitudes.
3. **Publication Period:** Studies published between 2000 and 2024 were included to reflect the contemporary development of PBL in language teaching.



4. Study Design: Both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered. Qualitative studies included case studies, action research, and ethnographic studies, while quantitative studies primarily consisted of experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

Study Selection

The search process yielded a total of 115 studies. After reviewing titles and abstracts, 65 studies were excluded based on irrelevant topics, such as PBL applications in non-language contexts or research not focused on language learners. A further 18 studies were excluded due to lack of focus on language outcomes, such as studies focusing primarily on content learning or those without measurable language skills data. Ultimately, 32 studies met the inclusion criteria and were selected for analysis.

Data Analysis

The selected studies were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. First, each study was carefully reviewed to identify the main research questions, contexts, and methods used. Then, key themes related to the use of PBL in language teaching were extracted, focusing on:

- **Language Skill Development:** The impact of PBL on the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Babayev, 2022).
- **Learner Motivation and Engagement:** Studies exploring how PBL affects learner interest, motivation, and attitudes toward language learning.
- **Collaboration and Interaction:** The role of collaboration and peer interaction in language learning within PBL settings.
- **Teacher Roles and Challenges:** Analysis of the teacher's role in facilitating PBL and challenges faced during implementation.
- **Assessment:** How projects are assessed in PBL settings, both in terms of linguistic outcomes and the project process itself.

To ensure the accuracy of synthesis, all articles were read in full, and key findings were coded according to these themes. Studies that used mixed-methods designs were analyzed by integrating both quantitative data (such as test scores) and qualitative data (such as student interviews or teacher feedback).

Quality Assessment

Given the diversity in study designs and methodologies, an additional quality assessment was performed. Criteria for quality included the clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of methodology, validity of findings, and the robustness of the data analysis. Special attention was paid to the methodological rigor of experimental studies, including control group comparisons and



statistical analysis techniques, as well as the transparency of qualitative studies, such as data triangulation and member checking. This assessment ensured that the synthesized findings accurately reflected both the strengths and limitations of the studies reviewed.

Synthesis Process

The synthesis involved categorizing the findings into major themes, which were then compared and contrasted across studies. Special attention was paid to differences in results depending on the context (e.g., primary vs. secondary school settings, language proficiency levels, or cultural contexts). Where applicable, trends over time were noted to highlight how PBL's implementation in language education has evolved.

Results

The analysis of the 32 studies revealed several key outcomes related to the use of project-based learning (PBL) in language teaching. The results can be categorized into the following themes: language skill development, learner motivation and engagement, development of 21st-century skills, collaboration and interaction, and challenges in implementation. Each of these themes is discussed in detail below, highlighting the findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Enhancement of Language Skills

One of the most consistent findings across the studies was the positive impact of PBL on the development of various language skills (Babayev, 2023). Learners engaged in project-based tasks exhibited significant improvements in speaking, writing, listening, and reading proficiency.

1. Speaking and Listening Skills

Several studies demonstrated that PBL had a particularly strong impact on speaking and listening skills (Alisoy, 2022). Projects such as interviews, debates, and presentations required learners to engage in sustained oral communication, which not only helped improve fluency but also enhanced learners' ability to comprehend spoken language in real-world contexts (Stoller, 2006). For example, a study by Beckett and Slater (2005) found that students participating in PBL activities focused on authentic communication tasks such as creating video projects were more confident and fluent in their spoken language than those in traditional classroom settings (Ismayilli et al, 2025). In addition, the peer interactions and feedback inherent in PBL tasks provided valuable listening practice, especially in terms of understanding varying accents, speeds, and informal speech patterns (Naghiyeva, 2024); (Naghiyeva, 2025).

2. Writing Skills

PBL also contributed to the development of writing skills. By working on tasks such as creating reports, designing blogs, or writing project documentation, learners had opportunities to practice writing in a more purposeful, contextualized manner. Several studies found that students improved



not only their grammatical accuracy but also their ability to organize and structure written texts effectively (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Writing in PBL contexts often involved multiple drafts and peer feedback, which facilitated the revision process and helped students refine their writing over time.

3. Reading Skills

Although not as frequently highlighted, reading also benefitted from PBL in language teaching. The need for research in projects such as designing multimedia presentations or preparing for interviews encouraged learners to read a variety of materials in the target language, ranging from articles and books to web-based content (Fragoulis, 2009). This reading not only supported language acquisition but also encouraged students to engage with authentic texts, which was seen as more motivating and relevant compared to traditional textbooks.

Increased Learner Motivation and Engagement

One of the most widely reported outcomes in the studies reviewed was the increase in learner motivation and engagement as a result of PBL. This is consistent with earlier findings that suggest students become more motivated when they perceive learning tasks as meaningful and relevant to their lives.

1. Autonomy and Ownership

Many studies noted that PBL provided learners with a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning process. By allowing students to choose project topics, design their own tasks, and determine roles within groups, PBL fostered a sense of responsibility and empowerment (Thomas, 2000). For instance, Fragoulis (2009) observed that students in Greek primary schools who worked on projects related to their personal interests (such as environmental sustainability or cultural traditions) showed higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm than those participating in traditional language lessons.

2. Relevance and Real-World Connection

Another important factor contributing to motivation was the real-world applicability of the tasks. Many students reported feeling more connected to the target language because the projects reflected real-life situations. For example, a study by Beckett and Slater (2005) found that students in a PBL classroom were excited to produce a video documentary on local cultural events, which allowed them to use language in contexts that extended beyond the classroom. This authentic use of language, coupled with the social relevance of the project, greatly enhanced students' intrinsic motivation to learn.

3. Emotional Investment and Enjoyment



PBL also led to higher levels of emotional investment. Several studies reported that students found PBL more enjoyable compared to traditional language learning tasks. They enjoyed the collaborative aspects, the opportunity to showcase their work, and the sense of accomplishment that came with completing a complex, meaningful task (Zhou & Brown, 2015).

Development of 21st-Century Skills

In addition to linguistic benefits, PBL was shown to foster the development of critical 21st-century skills. The collaborative nature of PBL, along with its emphasis on problem-solving and creativity, helped learners develop transferable skills that go beyond language proficiency.

1. Collaboration and Teamwork

The collaborative aspect of PBL was highlighted as a major factor in improving learners' ability to work effectively with others. Many studies reported that students developed strong interpersonal skills through group work, which involved negotiating meaning, coordinating tasks, and giving and receiving feedback (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). In PBL projects, learners often needed to compromise, delegate responsibilities, and support each other, which built both language skills and social skills.

2. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

PBL tasks frequently required learners to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving, as they often had to deal with complex, open-ended questions. This was particularly evident in projects that involved researching and addressing real-world problems, such as environmental issues or social challenges. Studies found that these tasks encouraged students to think creatively and develop solutions in collaboration with their peers (Beckett & Slater, 2005).

3. Digital Literacy

With the increasing use of technology in PBL, many projects integrated digital tools for research, presentation, and communication. This exposure to digital platforms and tools helped learners develop digital literacy skills, which are essential in today's globalized, technology-driven world (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). For example, students creating online blogs or multimedia presentations not only practiced language but also learned how to effectively use various digital technologies.

Challenges in Implementation

While the benefits of PBL in language teaching are well-documented, several studies noted challenges in its implementation, particularly for teachers and learners.

1. Time Constraints

A major challenge mentioned in multiple studies was the time required to complete PBL tasks. Unlike traditional lessons that are often confined to a fixed timeframe, PBL projects tend to take



longer, which can be difficult to manage in language classrooms with tight schedules (Stoller, 2006). Teachers often struggled to balance the time needed for project preparation, execution, and assessment with other curriculum demands.

2. Uneven Group Participation

Another issue reported was the uneven participation of group members, which sometimes resulted in unequal contributions to the final project. Some students reported feeling frustrated by peers who were less engaged, and in some cases, teachers found it difficult to ensure fair participation and assess individual contributions (Fragoulis, 2009). This challenge was particularly pronounced in larger groups where coordination and communication became more difficult.

3. Assessment Difficulties

Assessing project-based learning was another challenge. Unlike traditional exams or quizzes, PBL outcomes are often multifaceted and involve both process and product. Teachers struggled to create fair and transparent assessment rubrics that captured both the language learning and collaborative aspects of the projects (Thomas, 2000). Additionally, while peer and self-assessment were used in some studies, these methods required careful guidance and training to be effective.

Discussion

The findings from this review suggest that project-based learning (PBL) offers substantial benefits in language teaching, notably in fostering language skills, increasing learner motivation, and encouraging the development of critical 21st-century competencies (Javid, 2023). However, the results also point to several challenges in implementing PBL effectively, highlighting the need for thoughtful planning, teacher preparation, and the development of robust assessment strategies. In this section, we will interpret these results through a theoretical lens, explore the practical implications for language teaching, and suggest directions for future research (Javid, 2024).

Implications for Language Teaching

Project-based learning aligns with several key principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT), both of which emphasize the importance of meaningful language use in real-life contexts. As the results from this review show, PBL not only enhances language skills but also promotes authentic communication, which is at the heart of these approaches. By working on projects that require students to solve real-world problems, collaborate, and use language for genuine purposes, PBL creates opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interaction, a crucial component of communicative competence (Stoller, 2006).

The enhancement of speaking and listening skills in particular highlights PBL's strength in fostering active language use. Projects such as interviews, presentations, and collaborative problem-solving tasks provide learners with ample opportunities to negotiate meaning, make



decisions, and communicate effectively with others. This aligns well with sociocultural theory, which emphasizes language as a tool for social interaction and cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). By engaging in projects that require communication within socially authentic contexts, students are not only practicing language but also constructing knowledge through collaboration and discourse.

However, writing skills development, while significant, appeared less pronounced in some studies. Writing in PBL often tends to be task-oriented and focused on producing a tangible outcome (e.g., reports, blogs, presentations), but the complexity of written tasks and the integration of critical thinking into writing could be further emphasized. Future projects could benefit from more explicit scaffolding of writing skills, perhaps through targeted pre-writing activities or peer review processes that support students in developing more sophisticated writing strategies. Teachers could design writing tasks that integrate reflective practices and more formal language use, ensuring a balanced focus on both fluency and accuracy.

Learner Motivation and Engagement

A striking finding from this review is the strong correlation between PBL and increased learner motivation, which is one of the key advantages of this approach. The opportunity for autonomy in project design, coupled with the relevance of real-world tasks, has been shown to boost intrinsic motivation in learners (Thomas, 2000). This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that learners' motivation is enhanced when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In PBL settings, learners often feel more empowered because they have more control over their learning process. Choosing project topics, defining the scope of the task, and setting goals are all empowering activities that increase motivation.

The increased **engagement** reported in many studies can be attributed to the way PBL transforms language learning from a passive experience into an active one. When students work on projects that are personally meaningful and socially relevant, they are more likely to stay engaged and persist in completing tasks. For example, a study by Beckett and Slater (2005) showed that students involved in creating a cultural documentary were not only more engaged but also demonstrated a deeper understanding of both language and culture, as they had to apply their learning in real-world scenarios.

However, there are practical implications for teachers when considering the potential downsides of increased autonomy. The increased freedom in PBL projects can sometimes lead to challenges in classroom management, particularly when learners are at different proficiency levels or have diverse expectations of the project. It is critical that teachers strike a balance between giving students autonomy and providing sufficient structure and guidance. Scaffolding, explicit instruction, and ongoing feedback are necessary to ensure that students remain on track and that the projects are linguistically and cognitively challenging without becoming overwhelming.



Development of 21st-Century Skills

The development of collaboration and critical thinking was another prominent outcome of PBL, and this reflects the growing recognition of these skills as essential for success in both educational and professional contexts. In PBL classrooms, students learn to collaborate effectively by negotiating meaning, dividing tasks, and resolving conflicts. This aligns with the 21st-century skills framework, which emphasizes communication, collaboration, and problem-solving as fundamental competencies for the modern workforce (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). The collaborative aspect of PBL also fosters social learning, where students gain from peer interactions that help them view problems from multiple perspectives and engage in critical discourse.

Similarly, creativity and problem-solving emerge as essential components of project-based learning. By working on open-ended, complex tasks, students learn to think critically and creatively as they design solutions and produce final projects. This was particularly evident in studies where learners created digital products, such as websites or videos, which required them to use their language skills in combination with other forms of literacy (e.g., digital, visual). Future research could explore the long-term benefits of these skills in the language classroom, particularly in preparing students for the demands of a globalized, interconnected world.

However, the development of these skills often requires careful attention to group dynamics and task design. Group work can be highly beneficial for developing collaboration and communication skills, but as highlighted in the results, it can also lead to uneven participation among group members. This issue points to the importance of clear role assignments, accountability mechanisms, and structured group processes that ensure equitable participation from all students. Teachers should consider integrating peer and self-assessment practices to help mitigate this issue, while also providing guidance on effective collaboration strategies.

Challenges in Implementation

While PBL offers numerous benefits, it is not without its challenges. One of the primary difficulties identified across the studies is time management. Unlike traditional classroom activities that can be completed within a single lesson, PBL requires extended periods of time for planning, collaboration, execution, and reflection. This presents a challenge for teachers working within tight curricula, where time for in-depth projects may be limited. Teachers may need to adapt the scope and complexity of projects to fit within the available time frame, or strategically integrate project work into existing lesson plans.

Another challenge is assessment. In PBL, assessment is often more subjective and multifaceted, requiring teachers to evaluate not only the final product but also the process, collaboration, and individual contributions. This makes it difficult to apply standardized tests or grading rubrics. As highlighted in the studies reviewed, developing clear assessment criteria and using a mix of assessment methods (e.g., formative assessment, peer review, self-assessment) is critical to



ensuring fair and comprehensive evaluation. Teachers may also benefit from professional development on how to design rubrics that assess both linguistic performance and the project process.

Directions for Future Research

While this review has highlighted the benefits and challenges of PBL in language teaching, several areas warrant further investigation. First, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of PBL on language proficiency would provide valuable insights into whether the benefits of PBL persist beyond the immediate classroom experience. Additionally, research on how PBL can be adapted for diverse learner populations, including learners with varying proficiency levels or those from different cultural backgrounds, could inform best practices for inclusive language teaching. Finally, exploring how technology can further enhance PBL in language classrooms, particularly in virtual or hybrid learning environments, is an important avenue for future research.

Conclusion

Project-based learning (PBL) proves to be a powerful approach in language teaching, offering significant benefits for language development, learner motivation, and the acquisition of 21st-century skills. The findings from this review highlight how PBL fosters authentic language use through real-world projects, promoting speaking, writing, listening, and reading proficiency. Learners benefit from increased engagement, autonomy, and collaboration, while also developing critical thinking and digital literacy. However, the successful implementation of PBL requires careful planning, particularly in terms of managing time, assessing both process and product, and ensuring balanced group participation. Teachers must also provide adequate scaffolding and clear assessment criteria to support students throughout the project. Despite the challenges, PBL's ability to create meaningful, interactive, and dynamic learning environments makes it a valuable pedagogical tool in modern language education. Future research should explore strategies for overcoming implementation challenges and further examine the long-term effects of PBL on language proficiency.

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The Advantages and Disadvantages of Teacher-Centered Instruction in Foreign Language Teaching Amidst Contemporary Demands: An Analysis Based on the Experience of Azerbaijan

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Abstract; This article analyzes the shifts occurring in foreign language education due to advances in science and technology, specifically examining the application of the teacher-centered instruction model within the Azerbaijan education system. The rapid proliferation of English, driven by globalization and strengthening international relations, has introduced numerous innovations into language pedagogy. The article highlights the gradual transition from the traditional teacher-centered approach towards a student-centered model. The key advantages of teacher-centered instruction are noted, particularly in the initial stages of language acquisition in primary grades (ages 5-6), where the teacher's role as a guide and resource is crucial. Concurrently, the disadvantages of this approach, including passive participation, restricted student freedom, and the potential use of outdated materials—are discussed. The paper also explores the application of teacher-centered elements across different age groups (primary, 5-9, and 10-11 grades) and the importance of specific methods in inclusive education, such as individualized training, repetition, and emotional support for students with special needs. The conclusion emphasizes the necessity of integrating an optimal and flexible mix of methods, leveraging technological innovations, and tailoring instruction to the students' ages and needs to ensure the effectiveness of modern language teaching. In the contemporary world, various changes have been occurred in recent years, including shifts in the teaching of second or target languages. Advances in science and technology have given rise to numerous innovations in teaching methods. The traditional teacher-centered approach is gradually giving way to a more student-centric teaching model, which, in turn, has led to alterations in teaching methods for educators.

Keywords: *teacher centered, student centered, inclusive education, elementary school*

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1. Introduction

The recent developments in science and technology have ushered in significant changes in field of foreign language teaching. Utilizing these technological innovations is no longer a choice but a necessity. In modern times, students' expectations in foreign language classes are shaped by the increased use of technology in the learning process. This influences the dynamic within the classroom for both teachers and students. In this article, we will explore the advantages and disadvantages of teacher-centered instruction.

It has been observed that the growth of tourism and commercial relationships among nations has made a unified language system more valuable, resulting in the rapid proliferation of English. Various methods and techniques have been employed to teach English, often combining several methods to achieve better outcomes and introducing numerous innovations in foreign language education. In Azerbaijan, like many other countries, English as a foreign language has become a part of the general education curriculum.

In our nation, the introduction to foreign language instruction commences in elementary school. The teaching of a second language occurs from the initial grade levels through to the senior grades. During the elementary years, the teaching approach is predominantly teacher-centered. This is necessary as students are encountering a foreign language for the first time and are not yet accustomed to understanding it or the learning methodologies involved. (Nigar, 2025)

The state adopts certain laws for education, and it is the teachers who implement these laws. No matter how educated and broad-minded our teachers are, they will bring up the next generation to be as educated. Education should be implement systematically, planned, and programmed by educational leadership and teachers so that the requirements of education are met.

During this initial stage, students might encounter challenges in locating appropriate materials and structuring their learning process, highlighting the crucial role of the teacher as a mentor to assist them through these difficulties. (Nigar.M, 2025)

With the introduction of English language instruction in Azerbaijan, questions arose regarding whether the teaching process should be teacher-centered or student-centered. Initially, language instruction in Azerbaijan followed a more teacher-centered approach, with teachers assuming a primary and dominant role in the classroom. This traditional teaching model persisted for many years, and its effectiveness remained a subject of debate. Subsequently, the influence of science and technology brought about various innovations in language teaching, gradually shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered learning.



2. Teacher-Centered vs Student-Centered Instruction

Student-centered education does not imply a passive role for the teacher, where they stand aside and do not participate in the classroom's educational process. Instead, the teacher should serve as a guide, assisting students in their learning journey and helping them determine where and how to start. The teacher must possess the knowledge of what and how to teach, imparting language learning skills to students through diverse methods. Introducing this new language to students requires the guidance of the teacher, prompting them to exert efforts to attain proficiency in the second language to the fullest extent of their capabilities (Javid.b, 2025)

By comparing teacher-centered and student-centered learning, we can determine which approach may be more effective in enhancing the learning process. In teacher-centered learning, the teacher assumes an authoritative role, controlling the entire class and determining the course of action.

In the selection of teaching materials, the activities conducted with them, and the choice of the teaching method, the teacher takes the lead. Peyton, More and Young stated that: In a traditional teacher-centered classroom setting, the instructor predominantly dedicates time to delivering the day's material to the class using tools like the whiteboard, Promethean board, or overhead projector. Students are expected to take notes and pose questions while the lecture is ongoing. This procedure should ideally proceed smoothly and without undue difficulty for the students. (Nigar, 2025)

In the classroom, students do not have freedom, and they must all accept the teacher's ideas and adapt to the method chosen by the teacher. Conversely, in a student-centered teaching approach, the teacher assumes a less central role, allowing the learners to take the lead. Student-centeredness emphasizes cooperative learning, where a student group collaborates to accomplish a designated task, promoting increased interaction among students. (Ismayilli.T, 2025)

In this process, the teachers serve as an observer and a guide. During the lesson, the students' opinions are taken into account, and the lesson is organized to align with their interests. At this time, students' interest to the lesson increases, and their motivation rises. In teacher-oriented instruction, the teacher still employs traditional teaching methods and technologies. This does not capture the interest of children who can freely and easily use all technological innovations in the modern era. They prefer lessons to be conducted with more modern methods and believe that this can be more beneficial for them rather than traditional methods.

Another important issue is the materials used in the teaching process. In teacher-centered instruction, the teacher delivers the materials to the students in a ready-made form and requires them to work only with these materials. This hinders students' freedom of choice. As a result, student don't want to actively participate in the lessons, and the teaching process is carried out



passively. Traditionally, control has been a top priority in teacher-centered classrooms, which has led to criticism for favouring passive students over active ones in the classroom. (Benson, 2015)

In addition, these materials have been used for years, sometimes are outdated, useless, and have no connection to modern teaching methods, which is one of the main problems of teacher-centered teaching.

Furthermore, giving students freedom in the class can sometimes lead to undesirable consequences. In student-centered teaching, some argue in favour of giving students complete freedom during the lesson. However, sometimes this may not be the most effective approach. Mart states that “Dedicated teachers understand that it is their responsibility to inspire students towards active learning and prioritize the promotion of students' intellectual and moral growth. (Brown, 2014)

Considering the age diversity among students, whether this approach can be applied to all age groups may be subject to discussion. Marta stresses Emphasizing the significance of motivation and highlighting it as a key determinant of educational success, it is suggested that sustaining motivation can be effectively achieved through unwavering commitment. (Zulfiyeva,S, 2021)

In some cases, it may not yield good results with young children and lead to confusion in the classroom.

We can clearly say that students or foreign language learners cannot construct or improve their skills and understandings by themselves without a facilitator.

3. Age Factor and General Methodological Suggestions

Also, the age factor has great importance during the teaching process. Teacher should know how to organize lessons according to students' age. To teach foreign language to teenagers and primary school children's is quite different. Teachers can face some challenges when teaching adults and teenagers. Some suggestions can help them to overcome these difficulties.

1. Be guided by the learners
2. Observe
3. Open tutorials and more formal tutorials
4. Give them a voice
5. Regular feedback sessions



6. Active learning process
7. Problem solving or real-life tasks
8. Build on prior knowledge
9. Celebrate achievements
10. Consider that adults may have been working all day - engagement to help motivation is key

As we know teacher-centered language learning still relevant and used in different educational settings - kindergartens, schools, universities, all around the world. Some learners may benefit from teacher-centered method, who prefer traditional teaching methods, who needs additional support and scaffolding.

4. Application of Teacher-Centered Instruction at Education Institutions

4.1. Teaching English in Primary Classes

As we know, there are stages and levels of education where education is organized in various forms. The form of organizing education depends directly on the teacher and the institution where the education is conducted.

Education in Azerbaijan starts from the age of 5–6, and from this age, foreign language education, especially English, begins in schools. The role of the teacher in the teaching process during these stages is considered indispensable. Teacher-centered education begins to be taught in various forms according each level and age group.

Teaching English in primary classes

In primary classes, when organizing foreign language lessons, the main responsibility falls on the teacher because at this time, the teacher is the main manager of the process. In primary class, students are introduced to the English language for the first time. Students who are unfamiliar with this language may have difficulty in acquiring it. The main task of the teacher should be to make students love the language first. This teaching method in lower grades relies solely on teacher-led instruction. Because without the teacher's assistance, students cannot do anything. The teacher must make lessons interesting for the students, as learning a foreign language may seem difficult at first for students who have just started to read and write in their own language. The planning of the lesson process is crucial here, which aids the teacher. The main duty of the teacher is to assist students in acquiring the foreign language. (Mart, 2019)



Since teachers bear more responsibility in lower grades, the role of the teacher is considered very important in classroom conditions. The expression of children's own ideas, the development of their intellectual level, the development and formation of communication skills with other children and individuals are realized through the teacher's means. The teacher must be versatile for this. Teaching children only a foreign language is not enough. The teacher must develop themselves and through this development, contribute to the development of children. Although the teacher directs the lesson, they should give freedom to the children so that they can easily ask the teacher what they want. Because at this age, children are interested in everything, and their desire to learn is high. The teacher must create a supportive environment for them.

In addition, the teacher's supervisory ability should be at a high level. They should monitor each student separately, observe how they grasp the foreign language better, and prepare a training plan and strategy accordingly to this plan.

In this stage the teacher can make the lesson process more effective by using various methods and techniques. The methods that can be mainly used for students of this age can be listed as follows:

1. We can turn lessons into music to teach foreign language to children. This will make lessons more interesting and help students better assimilate the lesson. For example, when teaching students English alphabet, we can easily use the ABC songs from different resources. This will make lessons more enjoyable and comfortable for them. (Peyton, 2021) Additionally, many children's songs available on the internet can also help us. This will increase our students' vocabulary and gradually help them develop proper sentence structure. We can also use various facial expressions and hand gestures to help students understand the meaning of words. Since the structure of songs is simple, explaining them in English and creating conditions for students to understand them is a comfortable process.
2. Visual diagrams and shapes can be used when teaching the lesson. This will help in the formation of students' visual memory and help them better retain information. Students will see the shape of words and directly learn their pronunciation in foreign language. This will gradually help them increase their vocabulary.
3. Passing the lesson with games will make the lessons more interesting and enjoyable for students. It is possible to apply auction method comfortably with children who have a certain vocabulary. This will create conditions for their active participation in the lesson and also help their brains work more actively. Additionally, all children will be eager to actively participate in the lesson.
4. It is necessary to always review previous lessons with children so they do not forget what they have learned and strengthen their memory. Drilling is the main activity during the



foreign language learning process. It will help during the learning of vocabulary and grammar rules.

5. Using multimedia in the lesson can be more effective and enjoyable. If there are facilities in the classroom, we can watch beginning-level cartoons on a projector or individual computers. This will attract the attention of all students. Because in this age students like to watch cartoons or animation movies. At the end of the lesson, we can also give small surprises to students to further motivate them. Small gifts or storybooks will further motivate students who are just beginning to learn a foreign language and create interest in them. It is necessary to instil in them from a young age how beneficial it is to learn a second language.

4.2. Teaching Language in Grades 5–9

Teaching a foreign language in grades five to nine is similar to elementary grades, but there are differences. Here, teachers give students some freedom. However, the process is carried out directly under control of the teacher. Children who have already been engaged in learning a foreign language since lower grades can perform assignments here comfortably and independently. However, teacher-centered teaching still predominates at this stage. Because all of this process is carried out under the mentorship of the teacher. The teacher provides students with necessary information, explains how to learn, and guides them. As a result of the teacher's assistance, students can understand the lesson better. One of the main role of the teacher at this stage is to ensure that students acquire the four skills. Without the teacher's mentorship, it would be difficult to develop these four skills together in students.

At this age, students often experience instances of losing interest in the lesson, which can lead to a loss of interest in the lesson. Therefore, the psychological state of students should also be considered.

The teacher can still be considered the main source of information at this stage because students are at different levels and cannot fully complete their tasks independently without the teacher's assistance. The development of fluent speaking skill in student is considered one of the main goals set by the teacher. Since the students have already acquired a certain level of language skills and have a sufficient vocabulary, they should be able to speak fluently. For this, the teacher can use several methods together or separately. However, it should not be forgotten that alongside fluent speaking, control over the correct pronunciation should also be ensured in students. Sometimes, teachers who only focus on speaking forget these aspects, and even though the students speak fluently, the listener may have difficulties in understanding them.



If the following techniques are implemented by the teacher, students can better assimilate language skills at this stage:

1. Increased use of dialogues – If the teacher wants to develop students' communication skills, they should give more space to dialogues. Dialogues can be taken mainly from real-life situations. Dialogues related to such situations interest students. The teacher can choose the topic themselves or allow each student to choose a topic individually. As students work with these dialogues, their ability to communicate freely will develop, and they will find it easier to understand the language.
2. Writing essays – One of the main tasks the teacher will give students at this stage to develop their writing skills. The teacher selects a topic and asks students to write essays on it. At this time, students' writing skill and thinking abilities begin to develop. On the other hand, this can also help enrich students' critical thinking and expand their vocabulary. When students write essays on a topic, the teacher should require them to find new words related to the topic, use these words in the essay, and create a separate list of newly used words. As students work with new words, they will better assimilate and remember them. This will also affect the development of students' thinking and outlook. Essay evaluation can also be organized by the teacher in different ways. The teacher can ask students to evaluate and assess the essays of their classmates. Since this stage requires attention, students should be prepared for this process by the teacher and should use the tactics provided by teacher. After students check the essays, the teacher can ask them for their opinion and thoughts on the essay. This is considered advantageous for students because they both write their own essays and read their classmates' essays and express their opinions. This enhances students' thinking and develops critical thinking.
3. Watching films – The teacher can organize film days in the classroom to make lessons more interesting. This will have great impact on changing the atmosphere of the class and creating a positive learning environment for students. In addition, the films watched will introduce students to the language of native speakers and help them develop proper pronunciation rules.
4. Teacher mentoring – Through this, students can become acquainted with information that they may have missed during the lesson process through the teacher's help. Additionally, the teacher should explain the new lesson and provide the necessary information about the lesson to the students. The teacher is the main source that can help students develop proper pronunciation (Nigar, 2023).
5. Education, the basic idea is to develop four skills in students simultaneously. When selecting reading texts, teacher should be especially careful. Here, the students' age,



language proficiency, and level as well as their area of interest, should be taken into consideration. Reading texts play a significant role in developing students' language skills. New words in these texts help to expand the students' vocabulary, while reading sentences also aids in forming correct sentence structure.

6. Listening activities – During listening activities, significant challenges can arise. Sometimes teachers do not pay attention to listening, while teachers who use listening texts may not explain its ways to students. This can lead to difficulties. Developing listening skill will be difficult for students for the first time. After some practice it will turn easy for students. Because they will be familiar to what they hear and after some time they will do listening exercises more easily.

4.3. Teaching Language in Grades 10–11

From 10th to 11th grades and high schools, this level is composed of students who already have a certain level of language proficiency. They have developed independent thinking, respect for teachers and classmates, and respect for others, which creates conditions for the teacher to comfortably organize the teaching process. In this section, the role of the teacher diminishes, and the superiority passes to the student himself. Because they can now work comfortably and freely on their own. This creates conditions for the teaching process to be organized comfortably. Choosing the topic, participating in discussions depends on student, and the teacher can only act as a guide here. In this stage teaching process is more student-centered. Students are active role in this stage. They can choose teaching materials by themselves and can organize teaching process. But teacher's help is crucial. Because finding appropriate materials can be difficult for students and teacher knows where to begin learning foreign language.

5. Inclusive Education: Methods of Teaching Foreign Language in Inclusive Education

In the last ten years, inclusive education has begun gain special importance in our country. Attention began to be paid special children in all schools, and this showed how important inclusive education is.

Treating special children with attention and care, educating them, and integrating them into society has become priority issue in the education system. Here, the role of school administration and teacher has been crucial.

In inclusive education, it is necessary to create a special environment for the children where they are welcomed more warmly, a supportive environment is created for them by their families, classmates, and teachers, and all materials and resources are made accessible to these children. It is necessary to create an environment in the class where the students can accept the difference of this students. Inclusive education includes all materials in the curriculum. By using various



teaching methods and techniques, it has been possible to provide quality education. In addition, inclusive education not only provides advantages to special children but also contributes to the development of critical thinking, empathy, and cooperating among those around them. Inclusive education also creates conditions for everyone to receive equal education without regard to race, social identity, disability, or language identity. In addition, teachers are encouraged to constantly work on improving their own methods and skills.

Special approach is necessary when teaching foreign languages to students with disabilities. Because the foreign language learning ability of such children may vary due to the differences in their disability levels. It is possible to achieve effective results by using the following methods and teaching techniques:

1. **Individualized training** – individualized training is a fundamental part of inclusive education. Individualized training is prepared individually by the teacher according to the student's abilities and learning capacity and adapted to that student. Having one or two special children in each class makes teaching more comfortable and creates a convenient and conducive environment for the teacher to engage with them individually. In this case, the teacher can also use many different tools. Showing the word in a foreign language through shapes and explaining it, or giving priority to kinaesthetic methods can attract the student's attention and provide a more comfortable learning environment for special children. In addition, the use of gestures and facial expressions can be advantageous when learning a foreign language.
2. **Emotional approach to students** – It is very important to consider the feelings of such children when teaching a foreign language. The more kindly a teacher behaves towards the student, the more they can engage them in learning process. It is necessary to create an atmosphere for children where they feel comfortable and can easily adapt to other students (Nigar, 2023).
3. **Continuous repetition and reinforcement** – Giving priority to continuous repetition is necessary to help students better assimilate new language understanding. Previous lessons should be reviewed when introducing new lessons to reinforce them in the child's memory. In addition, using games, songs, and interactive activities can make the learning environment more interesting and keep student engaged.
4. **Simplifying the language** – When teaching foreign language to such children, we need to simplify the language as much as we can. We can use simpler sentence structures, simple words and expressions that are more comfortable for children to understand. This will stimulate their interests and make the process interesting for them. A student who feels



they have the abilities to learn language will approach the lesson more comfortably and eagerly, always eager to learn new things.

5. **Use of technology** – Technology is an integral part of the present era. Therefore, it also appeals to the interests of these special children. Using technological innovations in class can attract children's interests. Watching cartoons or simple videos related to the language can make lesson more lively.
6. **Support and collaboration** – Individual tutoring or support from peers can be considered essential. The teacher can offer their personal help to the student and assist them in topics they find difficult outside of class time. In addition, the teacher should involve the student's peers in this work. This will create communication among them and will establish a supportive environment. The teacher can also provide comprehensive support. Comprehensive support refers to the collaboration of parents, teachers, institution staff, professionals involved in this work, and peers. Conditions should be created for the student to manage not only during class time but also after class and to make use of assistance.
7. **Patience and empathy** – The teacher should understand that these children are special. They may have learning difficulties, behavioural issues, or many conflicts. During language instruction, the child may refuse to learn or create noise in class, disrupting the learning process. Therefore, the teacher requires special patience. In my opinion, teachers should undergo special training to adapt to behaviour rules for these children and to manage the classroom environment effectively.

Teachers have pivotal role in inclusive education. Because they are resource of information and great helper for special children. Teacher should consult with the parents regularly for informing them about students' achievement and success.

6. Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this article indicates that teacher-centered instruction, while a traditional method, retains its significance in specific phases of foreign language teaching. Particularly in primary classes (ages 5–6), where students are first encountering a foreign language and are not yet accustomed to the learning methodologies, the dominant role of the teacher in managing instruction, presenting content, and conveying core knowledge is essential. In this stage, the teacher can structure the lesson effectively and engagingly by utilizing methods such as songs, visual diagrams, games, and continuous drilling.

However, as the educational level advances, specifically in middle and senior grades (10–11th grades), a transition towards a student-centered learning approach becomes more appropriate, driven by the influence of technology and the students' developing independent critical thinking



skills. In these later stages, the teacher should move beyond being the primary source of knowledge and act as a mentor or guide, directing students toward activities like real-life dialogues, essay writing, and critical analysis.

Furthermore, the requirements of inclusive education highlight the importance of the individualized and emotional components inherent in the teacher's role. For students with disabilities, individualized training plans, simplified language, patience, and empathy must form the core principles of the teacher's professional practice.

In summary, the effectiveness of modern foreign language instruction is achieved not through a rigid separation of teacher-centered and student-centered methods, but rather through the optimal and flexible integration of these approaches, tailored to the students' age, proficiency level, and specific requirements. The teacher must develop a comprehensive and balanced strategy in every teaching context, utilizing modern technological tools to foster the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) simultaneously.

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Social And Cultural Factors in the Formation of Individual Style in the German Language

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Abstract; This article examines the social and cultural factors that shape individual linguistic style in the German language. Drawing on sociolinguistic, stylistic, and intercultural communication research, it explores how regional variation, social class, education, digital media, migration, and identity practices influence personal language use. German's rich dialect landscape provides speakers with diverse stylistic resources, while contemporary mobility and regiolect formation further expand these options. Social structures—including occupational norms and educational expectations—guide stylistic choices in formal and informal contexts. Digital communication and youth culture accelerate stylistic innovation, fostering hybrid forms that transcend traditional boundaries. Multilingual environments and migration contribute additional layers of diversity, reshaping linguistic norms and challenging monolithic views of German. The findings highlight individual style as a dynamic, context-dependent construct negotiated through social meaning and identity performance. Understanding these factors offers insight into linguistic variation in modern German-speaking societies and informs broader theories of style.

Keywords: *German sociolinguistics; individual style; dialects; identity; multilingualism; digital communication*

1. Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a central instrument for expressing social identity, cultural belonging, and individual personality. In sociolinguistics, the concept of individual linguistic style refers to the constellation of phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic choices a speaker consistently employs (Alisoy, 2025). These choices are influenced by both internal factors—such as personal preferences, communicative goals, and psychological traits—and external factors, including the speaker's social environment, cultural background, and

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interactional context. In the German language, which encompasses a wide geographical area and numerous cultural traditions, the mechanisms shaping individual style are particularly complex.

Individual linguistic style is a fundamental concept in sociolinguistics, reflecting how speakers construct identity through language. In the German-speaking world—comprising Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, and German-speaking minorities—language practices are shaped by complex social and cultural contexts. Previous research highlights that linguistic choice is not arbitrary: it is influenced by social class, region, gender, education, and cultural norms (Auer, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2016). This paper investigates these influences, with a focus on how they contribute to stylistic differentiation among German speakers.

German-speaking societies are characterized by significant regional diversity, resulting in a continuum between dialects, regiolects, and Standard German. This variability provides speakers with a wide linguistic repertoire from which to construct personal style. For many speakers, everyday communication involves navigating between these varieties, a process known as style-shifting. Such shifts not only reflect situational demands but also index social identities and cultural affiliations. Understanding how these repertoires are formed and negotiated offers insights into how individual styles develop in relation to broader sociocultural structures.

Furthermore, individual style in German is influenced by social stratification, including education, socioeconomic status, professional roles, and age. Standard German remains the prestige variety in formal contexts, but the increasing social acceptance of regiolects and dialects has created new stylistic possibilities. At the same time, contemporary media environments—shaped by globalization, digitalization, and the proliferation of social platforms—exert a strong influence on language use. These environments expose speakers to diverse linguistic models, encourage stylistic creativity, and facilitate the rapid spread of new forms (Gataullina et al, 2017).

Cultural factors are equally significant. Migration flows and the growing presence of multilingual communities have introduced new linguistic practices into German-speaking regions. Forms such as Kiezdeutsch, a multiethnic urban variety, reveal how cultural hybridity contributes to the evolution of individual and group styles. Additionally, the concept of style is closely linked to identity construction, including gender identity, generational identity, and the values shared within peer groups or professional communities.

Although numerous studies have examined variation within the German language, fewer have directly addressed how social and cultural factors jointly shape individual linguistic style. This paper aims to contribute to this area by synthesizing research across sociolinguistics, stylistics, and intercultural communication (Alisoy, 2025). By reviewing the main external influences on stylistic formation, it seeks to clarify the relationship between societal structures and the personal linguistic strategies employed by speakers in contemporary German-speaking contexts.



2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative review of existing sociolinguistic and stylistic literature on German. Sources include peer-reviewed articles, monographs, and corpus-based studies addressing social variation, dialectology, language attitudes, and stylistic choice. The analysis synthesizes theoretical perspectives from variationist sociolinguistics, interactional sociolinguistics, and cultural linguistics to identify key factors contributing to individual style in German.

This study employs a qualitative, literature-based research design aimed at synthesizing existing theoretical and empirical findings on the social and cultural determinants of individual linguistic style in German. The methodology integrates principles from systematic literature review, thematic analysis, and conceptual synthesis.

2.1 Literature Selection and Sources

The corpus of analyzed literature includes peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, book chapters, and corpus-linguistic studies published primarily within the last two decades. Foundational works from earlier periods were included when they offered essential theoretical frameworks for understanding sociolinguistic variation and stylistic phenomena. Sources were drawn from reputable publication venues in sociolinguistics, German linguistics, cultural studies, and discourse analysis. These included journals such as *Sociolinguistica*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *German Life and Letters*, and edited volumes by De Gruyter, Wiley-Blackwell, and other academic presses.

Digital academic databases—including JSTOR, Project MUSE, and Google Scholar—were consulted to ensure coverage of relevant research. Key search terms included “German sociolinguistics,” “individual style,” “dialect and identity,” “German variation,” “youth language,” “Kiezdeutsch,” “digital communication German,” “stylistics,” and “intercultural communication German-speaking context.”

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

1. **Relevance:** The work had to explicitly address linguistic variation, style, or identity within German-speaking contexts.
2. **Academic credibility:** Only peer-reviewed or scholarly sources were considered.
3. **Theoretical or empirical contribution:** Works needed to provide insights into sociocultural influences on language use.



Excluded were non-academic publications, journalistic accounts lacking methodological rigor, and studies not directly related to German linguistics or sociolinguistic factors influencing style.

2.3 Analytical Approach

The selected literature was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. This involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and concepts related to the formation of individual linguistic style. Themes included regional variation, multilingualism, digital communication, social identity markers, generational differences, and migration-related language practices. These themes were then organized into broader analytical categories representing the social and cultural factors that shape stylistic variation.

In addition, a conceptual synthesis approach was used to integrate findings from different theoretical traditions—such as variationist sociolinguistics, interactional sociolinguistics, and cultural linguistics—into a unified analytical framework. Special attention was given to how these traditions understand the relationship between macro-level social structures and micro-level linguistic choices.

As a literature-based study, this methodology does not include new empirical data. Therefore, the findings are dependent on the scope and quality of existing research. Another limitation is potential publication bias, whereby certain linguistic varieties or social contexts may be overrepresented in scholarly literature. Nonetheless, the diverse range of consulted sources and the inclusion of interdisciplinary perspectives help mitigate these limitations.

3. Results

3.1 Regional, Dialectal Influences

German is characterized by substantial dialectal diversity, with dialects and regiolects influencing vocabulary, phonetics, and syntax. Speakers often combine local dialect features with Standard German depending on context, producing mixed styles (Auer, 2005). These choices signal regional identity and sociocultural belonging.

Regional variation remains one of the most influential determinants of individual style in the German-speaking world. The coexistence of Standard German, numerous dialects, and intermediate regiolects provides speakers with a wide range of stylistic resources. Studies indicate that speakers often engage in controlled style-shifting, alternating between dialect features (e.g., lexical items, vowel quality, syntax) and standard forms based on setting, interlocutors, or desired identity performance (Ulduz, 2022).

Beyond traditional dialect usage, the emergence of regiolects—intermediate varieties shaped by urbanization, mobility, and media exposure—has expanded stylistic options for younger generations. These regiolects often replace or blend older dialect forms, reshaping how speakers



express regional identity. The degree of dialect retention versus regiolect use varies by age, education, social class, and geographic mobility, demonstrating the nuanced ways regional factors shape personal style.

3.2 Social Class, Education, and Professional Background

Educational attainment and occupational environment significantly influence stylistic features, including lexical sophistication, formality, and code choice. Research shows that speakers with higher educational backgrounds tend to align more closely with standard norms, especially in formal contexts (Elspaß, 2012).

Social stratification plays a central role in stylistic differentiation. Individuals with higher educational backgrounds often gravitate toward standard norms in formal contexts, reflecting both institutional expectations and social attitudes that equate linguistic correctness with competence and authority (Aslanova, 2011). Conversely, speakers from working-class or rural backgrounds may incorporate more dialectal or colloquial features into their personal styles, particularly in informal or community settings (Babayev, 2022).

Professional environments also exert influence. For example, occupations in academia, law, or administration favor highly standardized, formal registers, while artistic and creative fields promote stylistic experimentation and flexible register blending. Over time, these occupational linguistic practices become internalized, shaping stable aspects of individual style.

3.3 Media, Youth Culture, and Digital Communication

Youth language (“Jugendsprache”) and digital communication heavily shape individual linguistic style, particularly among younger speakers. Borrowings from English, creative word formation, and multimodal features (emojis, abbreviations) contribute to new stylistic repertoires (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Social media promotes style hybridization and rapid diffusion of linguistic innovations.

The proliferation of digital communication has introduced new stylistic resources that significantly influence individual language use, especially among younger speakers. The incorporation of Anglicisms, online abbreviations, emojis, and multimodal expressions reflects an increasingly globalized linguistic environment (Zeynalova & Ismayil, 2023).

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve as spaces where linguistic innovations spread rapidly and where speakers cultivate personalized linguistic identities (Javid & Sadikhova, 2025). The rise of influencer culture has popularized certain stylistic markers—such as exaggerated expressiveness, code-switching between German and English, and creative orthographic conventions—that speakers adopt to construct authenticity or modernity.



Youth language (“Jugendsprache”) continues to evolve through trends in music, particularly hip-hop, and internet memes. These influences contribute to highly fluid, hybrid styles that challenge traditional norms and expand the boundaries of individual expression.

3.4 Migration, Multilingualism, and Intercultural Contact

Migration has introduced new linguistic varieties such as Kiezdeutsch, a multiethnic youth style characterized by innovative grammar and lexicon (Wiese, 2017). These features reflect multicultural identities and challenge traditional norms of German usage.

Migration-driven linguistic diversity has introduced new stylistic features and communicative norms into German-speaking societies. Multilingual speakers often develop unique linguistic repertoires that blend German with elements from heritage languages. These practices can become defining features of personal style, particularly among speakers navigating intercultural identities.

Kiezdeutsch, a multiethnic urban variety, exemplifies how multilingualism shapes stylistic expression. Characterized by innovative syntactic structures, semantic shifts, and loanwords from Turkish, Arabic, and English, Kiezdeutsch functions as both a peer-group marker and a stylistic resource employed by speakers across social groups. The presence of such multiethnic varieties demonstrates the dynamic influence of intercultural contact on individual and collective linguistic styles

3.5 Gender, Identity Construction, Social Positioning

Gender influences stylistic preferences in vocabulary, politeness strategies, and discourse markers. Speakers use linguistic resources to perform gendered identities, although these distinctions are increasingly fluid (Harsch, 2010).

Gender plays a nuanced role in individual style formation. While earlier sociolinguistic research associated women with greater conformity to standard norms and men with more nonstandard features, contemporary studies highlight a more complex picture. Speakers of all genders increasingly adopt stylistic elements that align with self-expression rather than traditional gender expectations.

Identity categories such as sexual orientation, generational belonging, and subcultural affiliation also influence style. For example, members of LGBTQ+ communities may use distinctive discourse markers or lexical items to signal belonging, while subcultures—such as gaming communities, artistic groups, or sports clubs—develop their own stylistic codes.

Individual speakers actively draw on these identity resources to position themselves socially, demonstrating that style is a performative tool shaped by both personal and societal factors.



4. Discussion

The findings of this literature-based analysis reveal that individual linguistic style in German emerges from an intricate interplay of social, cultural, and communicative factors (Babayev et al, 2025). These influences operate not in isolation but as mutually reinforcing forces that shape how speakers select, modify, and negotiate their linguistic repertoires across contexts. The discussion below examines these interactions in greater depth, focusing on broader theoretical implications, patterns of change, and the dynamic nature of style formation in contemporary German-speaking societies.

4.1 Interactions Between Macro- and Micro-Level Influences

One of the key insights of the analysis is that individual linguistic style reflects both macro-level societal structures—such as educational systems, migration patterns, and media environments—and micro-level choices related to identity and interpersonal relations. This dual-level perspective aligns with sociolinguistic frameworks that treat style as both structurally conditioned and agentively constructed.

For instance, while regional dialect systems impose structural constraints on the linguistic resources available to speakers, the actual use of dialect or standard forms is a matter of individual positioning. Speakers strategically highlight or minimize dialectal elements depending on their communicative goals, desired impressions, or social relations. Thus, macro-level variation systems provide the raw materials, while micro-level agency shapes how these materials are deployed in practice.

4.2 Style as a Negotiation of Identity and Social Meaning

Individual style functions as a semiotic tool for negotiating identity, aligning with theories of indexicality (Silverstein, 2003; Eckert, 2008). Linguistic features point to social meanings—regional roots, education, gender performance, or subcultural affiliation—and speakers manipulate these indexical meanings to construct and project their identities.

For example, the adoption of youth language features by young adults can signal affiliation with modern, globalized identities, while the conscious incorporation of dialect elements may emphasize authenticity, locality, or solidarity. In multilingual or multicultural settings, stylistic hybridity may serve to express complex identities that transcend traditional categories. This supports the view that linguistic style is neither fixed nor merely inherited; it is continuously created in interaction.

4.3 Media and Digitalization as Accelerators of Stylistic Change

Digital communication has emerged as a particularly powerful force in shaping contemporary linguistic styles. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitch, and messaging apps do more than



merely transmit language—they create new environments for experimenting with linguistic creativity, multimodality, and performance.

The influence of digital communication extends beyond youth culture. Adults increasingly adopt digital-specific conventions such as emojis, shortened forms, or English borrowings, blurring the boundaries between spoken and written language. Moreover, influencers and online communities function as style models, accelerating the diffusion of innovative features into mainstream German (Ismayil, 2025).

This development highlights a shift from geographically localized language change toward a network-based model, where stylistic innovations spread through social media rather than traditional dialect continua.

4.4 Effects of Migration and Multilingualism on Style and Normativity

The growing linguistic diversity in German-speaking societies has broadened the stylistic repertoire available to speakers, challenging traditional notions of linguistic normativity. Multiethnic varieties such as Kiezdeutsch illustrate how linguistic innovations emerge from multilingual communities and subsequently influence broader language use.

Importantly, the spread of such varieties raises sociopolitical questions about linguistic legitimacy and inclusion. While some speakers view multiethnic German as a marker of creativity and multicultural identity, others perceive it as a deviation from standard norms. These contrasting attitudes reveal the ideological tensions surrounding language use, identity, and integration.

Nevertheless, research suggests that multilingual and migrant communities contribute significantly to the evolution of German linguistic practices, indicating that individual style in contemporary Germany increasingly reflects intercultural influences rather than homogeneous linguistic traditions.

4.5 Generational Shifts and the Fluidity of Modern Language Norms

German-speaking societies are experiencing notable generational shifts in linguistic attitudes. Younger generations generally exhibit greater flexibility in moving between registers, dialects, and stylistic modes. They also display more tolerant attitudes toward linguistic variation, valuing authenticity and creativity over adherence to prescriptive norms.

This shift contributes to a broader transformation in linguistic expectations. Whereas earlier generations often viewed Standard German as the ultimate linguistic ideal, contemporary speakers increasingly embrace fluidity, hybridity, and context-dependent variability. As a result, the divide between formal and informal styles is becoming less rigid, enabling speakers to craft personalized linguistic identities that draw from diverse sources.



4.6 Implications for Theories of Style in German Linguistics

The findings have several implications for sociolinguistic theory:

1. Style must be conceptualized as dynamic and hybrid, incorporating elements from dialects, regiolects, standard language, digital communication, and multilingual practices.
2. Identity construction remains central, highlighting the need for frameworks that account for intersectional identity dimensions (gender, ethnicity, class, locality).
3. Digitalization requires expanding sociolinguistic models to include multimodal, algorithmically mediated forms of communication.
4. Migration and superdiversity challenge monolithic conceptions of national languages, encouraging more inclusive models that recognize linguistic innovation from marginalized communities.

These insights suggest that the study of individual style in German must move beyond traditional dialectology and variation studies toward interdisciplinary approaches that integrate cultural studies, media linguistics, and identity theory.

4.7 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A key limitation of the existing literature—and therefore of this analysis—is the uneven representation of different social groups, regions, and linguistic practices. For example, rural communities, older speakers, and less documented dialect regions remain underrepresented in many studies. Additionally, rapidly developing digital communication practices are difficult to capture using traditional linguistic methodologies.

Future research should incorporate:

- **Ethnographic studies** exploring how individuals negotiate style across daily interactions.
- **Corpus-based approaches** that include digital discourse and less formal communication.
- **Longitudinal studies** tracing stylistic development across the lifespan.
- **Interdisciplinary perspectives**, such as sociocultural anthropology and digital media studies, to enrich linguistic analysis.

Individual linguistic style in German is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by complex social and cultural factors. Regional variation, social identity markers, media influence, and intercultural contact all contribute to the richness and diversity of German usage. Further empirical research—



especially corpus-based and ethnographic studies—will deepen understanding of how speakers negotiate stylistic choices in an increasingly interconnected society.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that individual linguistic style in the German language emerges from a complex interaction of social, cultural, and situational factors. Regional dialects, evolving regiolects, and Standard German create a diverse linguistic landscape that provides speakers with multiple stylistic options. Social class, education, and professional norms further shape stylistic preferences, while digital communication and youth culture function as powerful engines of linguistic innovation. Migration and multilingual environments enrich German with new expressive possibilities, challenging traditional notions of normativity and contributing to an increasingly heterogeneous linguistic reality. Across all these dimensions, individual style proves to be dynamic, context-sensitive, and deeply connected to identity construction. Speakers strategically draw on various linguistic resources to position themselves within social groups, express personal values, and navigate intercultural encounters. Understanding these processes not only clarifies patterns of variation in contemporary German but also supports broader theoretical perspectives on language, identity, and social change.

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Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence through Multilingual Education

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Abstract; The accelerating forces of globalization, technological connectivity, and transnational mobility increasingly position individuals in contact with diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives. These developments highlight the need for educational approaches that cultivate not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural communicative competence (ICC)—the capacity to interpret cultural meanings, negotiate differences, and communicate appropriately across cultural boundaries. This study examines how multilingual education fosters ICC among university students in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, two post-Soviet contexts marked by deep-rooted linguistic diversity and evolving language policies. Drawing upon cognitive and sociocultural frameworks, the research investigates how exposure to Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Russian, and English shapes learners' intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and communicative behaviors. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative survey data from 480 students with qualitative interviews conducted with 20 language instructors. Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between multilingual proficiency and key ICC dimensions, including cultural empathy, openness, and adaptability. Qualitative findings further demonstrate that multilingual classrooms serve as dynamic spaces for identity reflection, cultural negotiation, and collaborative meaning-making. The study underscores multilingual education as both a linguistic and cultural resource, offering implications for curriculum design, teacher preparation, and language policy aimed at cultivating globally competent and culturally responsive citizens.

Keywords: *Multilingual Education, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Global Competence, Language Policy*

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, accelerated globalization, rapid technological development, and intensified transnational mobility have reshaped patterns of communication and social interaction. Individuals routinely encounter diverse cultural perspectives through formal education,

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professional environments, travel, mass media, and digital platforms. These conditions place new responsibilities on educational institutions, which must prepare learners not only to master linguistic systems but also to navigate cultural difference in informed and ethical ways. Within this context, multilingual education has gained prominence as a key approach for developing both high levels of linguistic proficiency and heightened intercultural awareness.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)—understood as the ability to interpret cultural meanings, negotiate differences, and communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures—encompasses cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions, including openness, empathy, and adaptability. The development of ICC is particularly salient in settings such as Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, where multilingualism is embedded in everyday social life. Both countries are characterized by considerable linguistic and cultural diversity and have implemented reforms to strengthen foreign language instruction, especially in English, while promoting broader multilingual education. Despite these initiatives, the specific impact of such reforms on ICC development remains insufficiently examined.

Existing scholarship suggests that multilingual classrooms can function as productive intercultural spaces in which learners reflect on identity, compare cultural norms, and develop sensitivity to diversity. However, much of this work has been conducted in Western contexts, resulting in a limited understanding of multilingual education in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The interplay of Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Russian, and English in higher education institutions in these regions offers a distinctive context for investigating how multilingual exposure shapes students' intercultural perceptions and communicative practices.

The present study explores how multilingual education influences ICC among university students in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. It examines learners' linguistic trajectories, cultural attitudes, and communicative strategies, as well as the challenges educators encounter when integrating intercultural components into language curricula. By analyzing these dynamics, the study aims to generate empirically grounded insights for curriculum design, language policy, and pedagogical practice that more effectively foster intercultural competence. Ultimately, the study positions multilingual education as a key driver of ICC, transforming classrooms into spaces where linguistic diversity becomes a resource for empathy, cultural intelligence, and globally relevant communication skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between multilingual education and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has been widely examined in contemporary linguistic, sociocultural, and pedagogical research. Scholars from diverse theoretical traditions have illuminated how linguistic diversity shapes individuals' capacity to interpret cultural meanings, interact across cultural boundaries, and develop global perspectives. This literature review synthesizes major conceptual frameworks and



empirical findings on multilingualism, intercultural communication, and language education, with particular attention to their relevance for higher education contexts comparable to those of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

1. Multilingualism as a Cognitive and Sociocultural Resource

Early research on multilingualism concentrated primarily on its cognitive consequences. Studies by Bialystok (2001), Cummins (2008), and others demonstrate that multilingual individuals often exhibit enhanced metalinguistic awareness, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving skills. According to Cummins' interdependence hypothesis, these advantages arise from cross-linguistic transfer, whereby knowledge and skills acquired in one language support learning in another. Such cognitive flexibility is increasingly regarded as a foundation for intercultural sensitivity, enabling learners to shift between different linguistic and conceptual systems.

Sociocultural perspectives further enrich this understanding by emphasizing that multilingualism constitutes a lived social practice rather than a purely linguistic repertoire. García (2009), for example, conceptualizes translanguaging as the dynamic use of learners' full linguistic resources in meaning-making processes. From this vantage point, multilingual learners mobilize their languages in contextually responsive ways, creating opportunities for cultural interpretation, identity negotiation, and the co-construction of knowledge. Multilingual classrooms thus emerge as culturally dense spaces in which students actively construct, contest, and exchange cultural meanings.

2. Intercultural Communicative Competence: Concepts and Dimensions

Intercultural communicative competence has been theorized in multiple frameworks, yet most converge on the view that ICC comprises interrelated components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Byram's (1997) influential model identifies five key dimensions: (a) attitudes of openness and curiosity; (b) knowledge of social groups and cultural practices; (c) skills of interpreting and relating cultural information; (d) skills of discovery and interaction; and (e) critical cultural awareness. Deardorff (2006) extends this conceptualization by portraying ICC as a cyclical, developmental process grounded in respect, cultural empathy, and adaptability.

These models underscore that intercultural competence does not emerge automatically through exposure to additional languages; rather, it requires systematic opportunities for reflection, guided practice, and meaningful intercultural encounters. Empirical studies consistently indicate that multilingual learners tend to display higher levels of intercultural awareness than monolingual peers, in part because they regularly encounter diverse communicative norms, politeness strategies, and culturally situated expectations.



3. Linking Multilingual Education to Intercultural Competence

Research at the intersection of multilingualism and ICC suggests that engagement with multiple languages can significantly enhance learners' ability to understand cultural difference and communicate across cultures. Kramsch (1998) contends that language and culture are inseparable and that multilingual learners occupy a symbolic "third space" in which cultural meanings are compared, reinterpreted, and negotiated. This third space supports the development of intercultural mediation skills and encourages learners to view cultural practices from multiple perspectives.

Empirical investigations conducted in European, Asian, and Middle Eastern educational settings demonstrate that multilingual education often promotes attitudes such as tolerance, curiosity, and openness. Learners studying two or more foreign languages frequently report increased cultural empathy and a heightened capacity to adapt to unfamiliar social environments. At the same time, scholars caution that multilingual programs do not automatically produce intercultural competence. Without intentional integration of intercultural objectives, language teaching may remain narrowly focused on grammatical accuracy and fail to cultivate deeper cultural understanding (see, for example, UNESCO, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of designing multilingual curricula that explicitly embed intercultural aims and provide sustained opportunities for critical engagement with cultural difference.

4. Language Policy and Multilingual Education in Post-Soviet Contexts

A growing body of research examines multilingualism in post-Soviet countries, where linguistic landscapes have undergone substantial transformation since independence. Pavlenko (2013) and others note that these contexts are characterized by complex multilingual practices shaped by historical bilingualism (typically Russian–local language), the increasing prominence of English as a global lingua franca, and evolving national identity policies.

In Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, national policy documents stress the strategic importance of English for global integration while simultaneously affirming the centrality of the national language in public life and education. Despite these ambitions, empirical studies from the region point to persistent challenges, including limited teacher preparation in intercultural pedagogy, restricted access to authentic multicultural materials, and assessment regimes that privilege grammatical accuracy over communicative and intercultural outcomes. These tensions highlight the need for further research into how multilingual education can be designed and implemented to effectively foster ICC among university students in post-Soviet higher education systems.

5. Multilingual Learning Environments as Sites of Cultural Interaction

Recent scholarship underscores that multilingual classrooms constitute distinctive sites for intercultural engagement. Learners who bring diverse linguistic backgrounds to shared educational spaces also bring varied cultural perspectives, communicative styles, and experiences. Jackson



(2019) argues that such diversity creates “naturally occurring” contexts for cultural comparison, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative learning. Classroom interactions, group projects, and task-based activities thus become platforms for practicing intercultural skills in real time and for developing dispositions such as empathy, openness, and flexibility.

Digital technologies further extend the reach of multilingual and intercultural learning. Online exchanges, virtual mobility programmes, and international student collaborations enable learners to interact with peers across national and linguistic boundaries, thereby strengthening both linguistic competence and intercultural understanding. These developments align with broader educational trends that emphasize digital intercultural competence and networked forms of global citizenship.

Taken together, the reviewed literature reveals a robust theoretical and empirical link between multilingual education and ICC. Multilingualism enhances cognitive flexibility, supports cultural awareness, and creates opportunities for identity negotiation. At the same time, ICC—as a multidimensional construct—requires intentional pedagogical approaches that integrate linguistic and cultural learning. While multilingual education holds considerable promise in post-Soviet contexts such as Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, existing research indicates an ongoing need for more systematic integration of intercultural objectives into higher education curricula.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods design to investigate the impact of multilingual education on the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among university students in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a comprehensive understanding of both measurable learning outcomes and contextual factors shaping students’ intercultural development.

Participants and Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to 250 students in Azerbaijan and 230 students in Uzbekistan (N = 480). Participants were enrolled in language-related programmes at public universities. The survey contained Likert-scale items assessing:

- exposure to and use of multiple languages;
- self-perceived intercultural competence;
- attitudes toward cultural diversity; and
- confidence in intercultural communication.

These data enabled statistical comparisons of ICC-related variables across different levels of multilingual proficiency (e.g., two, three, or more languages).



Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 20 language instructors (10 from each country). The interviews explored pedagogical practices that support intercultural awareness, perceived challenges in implementing multilingual curricula, and instructors' observations of students' intercultural behaviours. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns, salient examples, and context-specific insights.

Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests to examine relationships between multilingual exposure and ICC-related measures. Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, following iterative cycles of coding, categorization, and interpretation. Triangulation between survey results and interview findings strengthened the validity and reliability of the conclusions.

Ethical procedures were rigorously observed. All participants received information about the study's aims and provided informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing institutions and individuals. The research framework was guided by Byram's (1997) model of ICC and Cummins' (2008) theory of linguistic interdependence, which together offered conceptual and empirical grounding for the interpretation of results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data reveals a clear positive association between multilingual education and the development of intercultural communicative competence among university students in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

Quantitative Findings

Survey results indicate that students with exposure to three or more languages obtained significantly higher scores on indicators of cultural empathy, open-mindedness, and adaptability than peers with more limited multilingual backgrounds. These students reported greater comfort when interacting with individuals from different cultural contexts and demonstrated heightened awareness of diverse communicative norms. The quantitative patterns suggest that increasing levels of multilingual proficiency are linked to progressively stronger ICC-related dispositions and self-perceptions.

Qualitative Findings

Insights from instructor interviews corroborate and deepen these quantitative trends. Educators consistently described multilingual classrooms as dynamic spaces of cultural exchange in which students compare linguistic and cultural norms, reflect on similarities and differences, and



gradually develop intercultural awareness. One instructor, for example, remarked that “students begin to realize that language carries cultural values; this realization significantly increases their sensitivity toward other cultures.”

Interviewees also identified a range of pedagogical strategies that appear to support ICC, including the integration of authentic texts from multiple cultures, collaborative projects involving mixed-language groups, and guided discussions of cultural practices in different languages. Such practices encourage learners to articulate and negotiate cultural meanings, thereby fostering skills of interpretation, interaction, and critical reflection.

Challenges and Constraints

Despite these positive developments, several structural and pedagogical challenges constrain the full potential of multilingual education. Instructors pointed to limited professional preparation in intercultural pedagogy, scarcity of culturally diverse and locally relevant learning materials, and assessment systems that continue to prioritize grammatical accuracy over intercultural learning outcomes. These obstacles mirror concerns raised in earlier research (Deardorff, 2006; Baker, 2011), which emphasizes that ICC development requires intentional curricular design rather than incidental exposure to additional languages.

Synthesis

Overall, the findings suggest that multilingual education not only strengthens students’ linguistic repertoires but also cultivates critical intercultural attitudes and behaviours. Exposure to multiple languages appears to facilitate the development of empathy, tolerance, and cognitive flexibility—attributes central to ICC. At the same time, the identified challenges underscore the importance of embedding structured intercultural learning opportunities within multilingual curricula and of supporting teachers through targeted professional development and revised assessment practices.

Intercultural Communicative Competence and Multilingualism

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct enabling individuals to communicate effectively and appropriately in culturally diverse settings. Drawing on Byram (1997), ICC comprises five interrelated components: (a) attitudes of openness and curiosity toward other cultures; (b) knowledge of social groups and cultural practices; (c) skills of interpreting and relating cultural information; (d) skills of discovery and interaction; and (e) critical cultural awareness. These dimensions underscore that successful intercultural communication depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on the capacity to understand, interpret, and navigate cultural differences.

Multilingual education offers a particularly fertile context for cultivating these dimensions of ICC. Engagement with multiple languages—each embedded in distinct cultural norms and value systems—exposes learners to diverse communicative styles, social conventions, and worldviews.



This exposure fosters cognitive flexibility and enhances learners' ability to mediate between cultural frameworks, thereby promoting both empathy and adaptability.

Research further suggests that multilingual learners often inhabit what Kramsch (1998) terms a "third space," a psychological and cultural zone in which meanings are negotiated across languages and cultures. Within this space, learners compare, contrast, and reinterpret cultural norms, leading to heightened awareness of diversity and more sophisticated intercultural skills. Multilingual experiences also encourage reflection on one's own cultural assumptions, a critical element of ICC that underpins respectful and effective interaction in globalized environments.

Crucially, multilingualism contributes to ICC not solely through language acquisition but through pedagogical practices that intentionally integrate cultural exploration. Activities such as comparative text analysis, cross-cultural discussions, virtual exchanges, and collaborative projects across languages help students develop the ability to interpret cultural signals and adjust their communicative behaviours to context. In this way, multilingual education functions simultaneously as a linguistic and cultural resource, equipping learners with the competencies necessary to navigate increasingly complex intercultural realities.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the pivotal role of multilingual education in fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among university students in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Engagement with multiple languages embedded in distinct cultural contexts was shown to support the development of cognitive flexibility, empathy, and critical cultural awareness—core components of effective intercultural communication. When intentionally structured, multilingual classrooms function as dynamic sites of cultural negotiation, identity reflection, and collaborative learning, enabling students to navigate difference and interact respectfully with culturally diverse peers. Quantitative findings indicate that exposure to three or more languages is associated with more positive attitudes, more advanced skills, and more adaptive behaviours related to ICC, particularly in unfamiliar social contexts and intercultural encounters.

At the same time, the study identified constraints that limit the full realization of multilingual education's potential, including insufficient teacher training in intercultural pedagogy, restricted access to authentic multicultural materials, and assessment practices that continue to prioritize grammatical accuracy over intercultural learning outcomes. These challenges underscore the need for systemic support if multilingual education is to fully contribute to ICC development.

Multilingual education should therefore be conceived not merely as a vehicle for linguistic acquisition but as a transformative educational approach that cultivates cultural intelligence, empathy, and a sense of global citizenship. Integrating structured intercultural components into multilingual curricula, alongside sustained teacher professional development and supportive policy frameworks, is essential for maximizing the educational, social, and professional benefits



of multilingualism. The findings of this study offer empirically grounded insights for curriculum design, language policy, and pedagogical practice, and reinforce the critical importance of multilingual education in preparing students for effective participation in an increasingly interconnected and culturally diverse world.

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