

# Korea TESOL Journal

Volume 17, Number 1  
2021



Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages



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# **Korea TESOL Journal**

**Volume 17, Number 1**



**Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**



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# Korea TESOL Journal

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**Volume 17, Number 1**  
**The Official Journal of**  
**Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**  
**(Korea TESOL / KOTESOL)**

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## About Korea TESOL

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Korea TESOL (KOTESOL; Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a professional organization of teachers of English whose main goal is to assist its members in their self-development and to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching (ELT) in Korea. Korea TESOL also serves as a network for teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and as a source of information for ELT resource materials and events in Korea and abroad.

Korea TESOL is proud to be an Affiliate of TESOL (TESOL International Association), an international education association of almost 12,000 members with headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, as well as an Associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), an international education association of over 4,000 members with headquarters in Canterbury, Kent, UK.

Korea TESOL had its beginnings in October 1992, when the Association of English Teachers in Korea (AETK) and the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) agreed to unite. Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons associated with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, Korea TESOL seeks to cooperate with other groups having similar concerns.

Korea TESOL is an independent national affiliate of a growing international movement of teachers, closely associated with not only TESOL and IATEFL but also with PAC (Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), consisting of JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching), ThaiTESOL (Thailand TESOL), ETA-ROC (English Teachers Association of the Republic of China/Taiwan), FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association, Russia), and PALT (Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.). Korea TESOL is also associated with MELTA (Malaysian English Language Teaching Association), TEFLIN (Indonesia), CamTESOL (Cambodia), ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL, MAAL (Macau), HAAL (Hong Kong), ELTAI (India), and most recently with BELTA (Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association. Korea TESOL also has partnership arrangements with numerous domestic ELT associations.

The membership of Korea TESOL includes elementary school, middle school, high school, and university-level English teachers as well as teachers-in-training, administrators, researchers, materials writers, curriculum developers, and other interested individuals.

Korea TESOL has nine active chapters throughout the nation: Members of Korea TESOL are from all parts of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a multicultural membership.

Korea TESOL holds an annual international conference, a national conference, workshops, and other professional development events, while its chapters hold monthly workshops, annual conferences, symposia, and networking events. Also organized within Korea TESOL are various SIGs (special interest groups) – e.g., Reflective Practice, Social Justice, Christian Teachers, Research, Women and Gender Equality, People-of-Color Teachers – which hold their own meetings and events.



Visit <https://koreatesol.org/join-kotesol> for membership information.

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# Korea TESOL Journal

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The *Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language. The Journal focuses on articles that are relevant and applicable to the Korean EFL context. Two issues of the Journal are published annually.

As the Journal is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to the application of theory to practice in our profession, submissions reporting relevant research and addressing implications and applications of this research to teaching in the Korean setting are particularly welcomed.

The Journal is also committed to the fostering of scholarship among Korea TESOL members and throughout Korea. As such, classroom-based papers, i.e., articles arising from genuine issues of the English language teaching classroom, are welcomed. The Journal aims to support all scholars by welcoming research from early-career researchers to senior academics.

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# **Research Papers**

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# An Initial Examination of Korean Secondary Students' Perceived Subject-Specific CLIL Efficacy

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**Daniel M. Savage**

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This study examined secondary students' perceptions of the relative efficacy of studying different academic subjects through content and language integrated learning (CLIL) at one public school in Korea. It aimed to delineate baseline subject-relative perceived efficacy for this group using a descriptive approach. A survey targeting current and former students measured perceived efficacy of English-medium CLIL for both content learning and language learning ( $N = 123$ ). Significant differences in perceived CLIL efficacy by subject were apparent in both content learning and language learning. Studying English literature through CLIL was perceived to be most effective, followed by social studies subjects, then science, and finally mathematics. While this study was a limited initial exploration, the findings that this group of Korean secondary students perceived CLIL efficacy to differ by subject suggest that adjustments to CLIL instruction by subject could improve CLIL instruction for Korean secondary students. This is therefore an important area for future research to maximize language and content learning for CLIL students.

*Keywords:* CLIL, secondary education, bilingual education in Korea, perceptions, subject differences, English-medium instruction

## INTRODUCTION

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1). *Content* in CLIL is academic knowledge and skills in subjects like history, mathematics, and science (Swain, 1996b). Some supporters expect that teaching this content through a second or additional language

(L2) will bring about more efficient learning of both content and language: a two-for-one approach (e.g., Zydariß, 2012). This expectation of efficiency has led CLIL to spread within and beyond its European home (Pérez Cañado, 2018).

Considerable research has examined CLIL and related L2-medium teaching including immersion, bilingual education, content-based instruction (CBI) and foreign language-medium instruction (e.g., English-medium instruction, or EMI). These tend to exhibit some differences in implementation, but the common factor of L2-medium instruction means researchers can benefit from their examination (Cenoz et al., 2014). Overall, research into these approaches has revealed uncertainty over their efficacy and the degree to which academic subject selection impacts their success. Content and language are explicitly integrated in instruction in South Korea (henceforth, Korea) in some cases, and content-based instruction or academic subject material use as language learning content is common. It is therefore necessary to examine the relative efficacy of various academic subjects.

The perceptions of the learners undergoing an instructional method are a valuable source of information on the efficacy of that instructional method. (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016). Perceptions of CLIL efficacy have not been examined extensively, but they provide one piece of the efficacy puzzle. This study approaches the question of relative efficacy across academic subject categories using perception data rather than alternative data sources that have already received significant attention in CLIL research. Different researchers using different approaches and sources of data can help uncover the truth of CLIL efficacy. Therefore, this paper outlines an initial empirical examination of perceptions of CLIL efficacy across academic subjects, specifically focusing on secondary CLIL learners in Korea.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section will outline the current state of CLIL research as it relates to this project and lay the foundations for the research question. First, it summarizes the extensive research and debate over CLIL efficacy, including some specifically from the Korean context. Then it briefly examines CLIL efficacy across subjects and the subject-specific language that bridges the content and language pillars of CLIL. Finally,

it addresses CLIL perceptions research, as this project approaches the question of efficacy through perception data.

## Debating CLIL Efficacy

Considering CLIL's popularity and continuing spread and therefore the potential impact on Korean learners, it is concerning that definitive evidence of efficacy remains elusive. CLIL's potential is supported by theories of L2 learning in that CLIL provides sufficient comprehensible input (Krashen, 1989) and opportunity for meaningful language output (Swain & Lapkin, 1995; see Dalton-Puffer, 2011 for a more extensive explanation). However, as outlined by recent reviews of the literature (Goris et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018), empirical examinations of CLIL efficacy for language and content learning have produced mixed results. The following section will present a necessarily selective review of key highlights from the extensive body of CLIL efficacy research.

The initial waves of CLIL research tended to support its efficacy and many took highly positive positions on the approach (e.g., Coyle, 2008; Coyle et al., 2010; Jäppinen, 2005). While some have pointed to the overwhelmingly positive evaluations at this time as indicative of a "bandwagon effect" or as "evangelical" (Cenoz et al., 2014, p. 256), it is difficult to deny that the large number of positive findings lend support to the idea that CLIL can achieve its dual objectives, at least under some conditions.

Lasagabaster (2008) provided strong evidence of CLIL efficacy for language learning in an examination of secondary students across four schools in the Basque area of Spain. Lasagabaster compared the English abilities of two groups that studied academic subjects through CLIL with those of a non-CLIL group. The results showed an advantage for CLIL students for all four skills, as well as for separate speaking and writing subscales. This supported the learning of English through CLIL in the European context, although Lasagabaster advised caution since females outperformed males in one of the CLIL groups. Additional support for linguistic achievement comes from Ruiz de Zarobe (2008) who conducted a similar CLIL versus non-CLIL examination but focused on speech production. The study included two Basque secondary school CLIL groups who were compared to a non-CLIL control group across a number of aspects of oral production. The CLIL groups were again found to outperform the control group on each measure. These two

studies are examples of the prevalent CLIL versus non-CLIL research design, where a group of students who study through CLIL are compared with a control group who study the content through their first language. The frequent usage of this design, as well as its limitations, will become apparent as this overview proceeds.

Researchers continue to uncover evidence that CLIL can enhance language learning, as exemplified by San Isidro and Lasagabaster (2018). In a carefully designed two-year longitudinal study, they found that their sample of Spanish secondary CLIL students progressed more strongly not only in English but also in their first language abilities. Importantly, the CLIL and non-CLIL groups were carefully matched before the course to reduce concerns of pre-existing differences in academic or linguistic abilities. This sampling of supportive research on CLIL published in English is complemented by research published in other languages in Europe and elsewhere. Meyer et al. (2015), for example, cite studies published in German that found CLIL to improve linguistic abilities more strongly than non-CLIL comparison groups without reducing content learning.

Investigations of content results have been less common and their results more mixed, as detailed by Graham et al. (2018). A variety of studies have found evidence that students who study through an L2 are able to match the content performance of first language-medium (L1-medium) peers. Swain (1996a) reviewed 25 years of research on French immersion in Canada and found that students were able to match the content performance of non-immersion peers if they had full immersion or sufficient pre-immersion French language instruction. Swain therefore concluded that learning content through a L2 is contingent on a certain L2 ability *threshold*. This contention is supported empirically (e.g., Lialikhova, 2019), and it makes sense that learners would need some minimum level of L2 ability to follow and engage with the academic content of the lesson. This also indicates a recognition of conditions required for successful learning through an L2. Evidence of successful content learning without slowing L1 development also comes from Seikkula-Leino (2007), Airey (2009), and Dafouz et al. (2014).

However, earlier CLIL research design has been criticized. One prong of this criticism was the fact that CLIL programs tend to attract students who are particularly interested in learning foreign languages, particularly motivated, and often more academically and linguistically

successful prior to entering the programs (Bruton 2011a, 2011b; Hüttner et al., 2013) This could result in initial differences between experimental and control groups and therefore has cast doubt on a lot of CLIL versus non-CLIL research, spurring researchers to conduct more carefully designed studies including strict matching of groups. One strong example is Pérez Cañado (2018), who conducted a large scale examination covering more than 2000 students across 53 schools in Spain. The researcher carefully matched groups using measures of English ability, motivation, and verbal intelligence. This adds credence to her findings that secondary school CLIL students generally outperformed the non-CLIL on science content. She also found that this advantage for content learning was achieved without needing to simplify the content or any impairment on L1 growth. Rosi (2018) found similar results in an examination of Italian secondary physics students. The study included a pre-test for physics knowledge to make sure the groups were on equal footing before the CLIL intervention and made efforts to ensure medium of instruction was the key difference. Rosi found that the CLIL group had a clear advantage for content learning after the study period as well as at delayed post-testing. Finally, Surmont et al. (2016) examined French-medium CLIL learning for Belgian secondary students studying mathematics. They similarly included some pre-study homogeneity checks and found an advantage for the CLIL group.

These more recent studies alleviate some of the concern about CLIL research, indicating that CLIL can bring successful language and content learning in secondary education in a variety of countries and for multiple L1–L2 combinations. Nonetheless, there remain those legitimately skeptical about CLIL efficacy. Graham et al. (2018) and Goris et al. (2019) both discuss the mixed research outcomes and the fact that they make it difficult to conclusively answer the question of CLIL efficacy. Goris et al. limited their overview to L2 outcomes. Even though there has been more language learning research and numerous positive findings, they still conclude that their findings “do not provide unequivocal support for the hypothesis that learners in a CLIL class will develop more [English as a foreign language] proficiency over a certain period than their mainstream counterparts” (p. 18).

Concerns over CLIL efficacy resulted in a broad critical reaction to the strong claims of early CLIL proponents. This involved methodological criticism, including but not limited to the potential selection bias in CLIL versus non-CLIL designs mentioned above, and

a considerable debate over CLIL efficacy (Bruton, 2013, 2015; Pérez Cañado, 2016b, 2017; Paran, 2013). Recent empirical results continue to spark doubt. For example, Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. (2017) compared students in schools with and without a CLIL program in a sample of 18 primary schools in Spain. The programs ran schoolwide, and the students were not subject to content or language ability admission criteria. All students completed a test of science knowledge in Spanish and the non-CLIL students scored slightly, but consistently, higher. Researchers have also found CLIL to benefit some groups but not others; Lialikhova (2019) and Fung and Yip (2014) both found lower-achievers<sup>1</sup> to be disadvantaged in terms of content learning in CLIL. Similarly, Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. (2018) found a disadvantage for CLIL students and that students from the lower socioeconomic status group were particularly impacted. Considering these findings, it is no surprise that students themselves express concerns about how studying through CLIL might impact their grades (Lasagabaster, 2017a).

Overall, these findings support the proposition that studying through CLIL can have some disadvantages and harm content learning in some cases, contradicting the positive findings discussed above. We can see “contradictory results depending on various research contexts, such as type of subject matter...” (Graham et al., 2018, p. 31), making it clear that CLIL efficacy is still an open question and that specific research is needed in different contexts and on specific aspects of CLIL programs, subject selection being only one of these.

## **CLIL in the Korean Context**

CLIL in Korea has been examined much less than it has in Europe, and there is relatively little research published in English. However, the fact that CLIL and other L2-medium teaching methodologies are used in the country demands research attention to ensure efficacy and enhance outcomes for Korean students.

Much Korean CLIL research has focused on primary education. Jeon (2012) describes a number of studies published in Korean that support the benefits of studying various subjects through English. These include improvements in listening, speaking, and reading with at least no harm to content learning, mirroring findings from other contexts. Other findings have been mixed; Jung (2001) examined an immersion program for primary students, finding an advantage for some language skills but

a disadvantage for others.

Researchers in Korea have also examined CLIL at the postsecondary level. Joe and Lee (2013) ran a carefully designed experiment with pre- and post-test measures of Korean and English lecture content comprehension. They found no difference in level of understanding between the two languages, though it should be noted that these were medical students who tend to be highly motivated and have relatively high English abilities relative to the average university student. Interestingly, they found that despite not differing on the measure of comprehension, the students *perceived* their level of understanding to be lower for English-medium lectures. This mismatch between perceptions and reality is particularly important to note since the present study centers on Korean students' perceptions of CLIL efficacy. Kim (2003) also compared university lectures in these languages but found a significant difference in comprehension favoring Korean-medium presentations, contradicting Joe and Lee's results. More recently, Kim and Yoon (2018) examined postsecondary students' grades for a course taught by the same professor through English and Korean. They found that students who studied through Korean got higher grades, though caution is needed since the study did not employ inferential statistics that would allow us to evaluate the existence or degree of statistically significant differences. The same study also included a campus-wide survey of undergraduates that indicated that while students were critical of English-medium courses, they still supported the school offering them. This may be related to the educational and economic capital of English abilities within Korean society (Park, 2009) and suggests that studying content through English and vice versa is likely to continue in Korea.

Generally, these mixed findings for CLIL in Korea echo the more general CLIL research results. The dearth of research on CLIL in Korea may be partially explained by the fact that CLIL programs have not been embraced in Korea to the extent that they have in Europe. Research has also focused mainly on postsecondary and primary levels, potentially due to the relatively small number of CLIL programs operating at the secondary level in Korea. This study hopes to contribute to filling this gap by examining perceived CLIL efficacy at one of the six specialized "global" public secondary schools in Korea (see Sung et al., 2013 for more detailed information on these "global" schools).

## CLIL Efficacy Across Academic Subjects

“If CLIL is to be properly and effectively implemented, the selection of the CLIL subject and its possible consequences need to be carefully examined” (Pladevall-Ballester, 2016, p. 56). The term *subject-specific language* describes the particular way language is used within different academic disciplines, including not only specific vocabulary but also variation in register and genre (Llinares, 2015; Meyer et al., 2015). Subject-specific language forms an important connection between the content and language aspects of CLIL (Pavon Vazquez, 2018). Although researchers have recently turned their attention towards subject-specific language and CLIL (e.g., Hüttner & Smit, 2018), the impact of academic subject selection remains an area in need of exploration (Pladevall-Ballester, 2016). This is particularly true since it can provide valuable information for CLIL program designers and language education policymakers.

Küppers and Trautmann (2013) note that some CLIL supporters believe that the approach “works in all school forms for all subjects in combination with all languages” but that this assumption does not appear to be justifiable (p. 290). There is evidence that language differs across subjects (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014) and that differential use of language within academic subjects leads to different opportunities for language learning (Lo, 2014), which could lead some subjects to provide more effective language learning – as well as more effective content learning through the L2. In addition, researchers have suggested that different subjects may have different required threshold L2 levels based on complexity or level of abstraction. For example, Swain (1996a) speculates that stronger L2 abilities may be needed to study science through CLIL as opposed to mathematics. This idea finds support from the empirical results of Dafouz et al. (2014) and Costa and Mariotti (2017). In an examination comparing EMI and non-EMI, Dafouz et al. found that postsecondary students were capable of achieving course goals when studying through an L2. However, they also found a difference in performance across subjects. Students had more difficulty in accounting and finance compared to history. The Dafouz et al. mention that this may seem odd since history would seem to rely more on language. However, the findings do conform to the idea that subject difficulty may differ based on factors beyond language, including abstraction. Costa and Mariotti set out to specifically examine the impact of studying different

subjects, again at the postsecondary level. They found four professors who were willing to teach the same course to different groups of students through English or Italian. Students who studied geometry and physiopathology through English had significantly lower final grades than the Italian-medium students, but no difference was found for the students studying economics or international relations. The potential impact of abstraction on difficulty is unclear for these subjects. Nonetheless, the results of these two empirical examinations indicate that efficacy may vary across academic subjects. Research on CLIL efficacy across subjects as well as across contexts is therefore vital to inform decisions around which subjects are best taught through CLIL to achieve effective language and content learning.

## **Perceptions and CLIL Perception Research**

Perceptions are a person's personal knowledge, theories, and evaluations, and are a key component of CLIL practice and success. Therefore, "interest in the social actors participating in CLIL programmes has increasingly led to the study of students' and teachers' perceptions of this new way of learning and teaching second languages and academic content" (Llinares, 2015, p. 61). Researchers pursuing this path have emphasized that a better understanding of learners' perceptions can help reveal the facts around CLIL (e.g., Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016) and improve learning, motivation, and CLIL programs as a whole (Lasagabaster, 2017a; Coyle, 2013). As indicated above, a lot of CLIL efficacy research involves comparing CLIL and non-CLIL groups and measuring language or content performance scores. These studies are vitally important, but they are not the only possible approach. In Coyle's words, "measuring learner attainment provides only part of the picture of 'success' – not all aspects of 'successful learning' can be measured by tests" and therefore "alternative evidence is needed" (2013, p. 246, 248) for a complete understanding of CLIL success. Perception data is one form of this additional evidence.

CLIL perception research is not entirely new (e.g., Aguilar & Rodríguez, 2012; Dafouz et al., 2007), but more recent research on perceptions of CLIL has begun to systematically add to this largely ignored subset of CLIL research (e.g., Kuteeva, 2020; Lasagabaster 2017b; Nikula, 2017; Oattes et al., 2018; Roiha, 2019). The following brief look at a sample of key publications will lay out the main focus

of this avenue as well as what remains unexplored.

Coyle (2013) used extensive qualitative measures to examine perceptions of motivation, learner achievement, CLIL difficulty, and a wide variety of other perceptions. They also employed a quantitative measure that included one item that read, “I feel I learn as much about the subject in lessons which use a different language, than I would do if it were taught in English” (Coyle, 2013, p. 265). The study did not address the efficacy of the CLIL approach for content learning beyond this indirect prompt. CLIL researchers’ common focus on language learning is reflected in Lasagabaster and Doiz’s (2016) CLIL perception study. In their study with secondary Spanish learners, they found that students perceived studying through English to be beneficial to their English abilities. Finally, Lasagabaster (2017a) also qualitatively examined the perceptions of secondary students in Spain, this time focusing on perceptions of motivation and student’s language use in the classroom. The study also elicited student suggestions for how to improve CLIL programs, again only peripherally approaching the question of the efficacy of this pedagogical approach.

These studies on CLIL perceptions provide necessary information on learner perceptions of a variety of CLIL facets. However, there are gaps that have not yet been probed by CLIL perception research. It is still unclear whether CLIL is an effective way to accomplish both language and content learning, as detailed above. Recent perception researchers explicitly state that this alternative data can contribute to the evaluation of success, but they have not focused specifically on perceptions of the efficacy of CLIL. This question has so far only been considered peripherally, with the focus remaining strongly on learners’ perceptions of their own learning, motivation, and personal success. Examination of language learning has dominated CLIL perceptions research, and content learning has received little attention, which follows CLIL research more broadly. Finally, as outlined above, there is reason to suspect that some subjects may be taught more effectively through CLIL, and therefore learner perception data can contribute to our understanding of efficacy differences across subjects. Since teachers and researchers often specialize in and focus on particular subjects, learners who have experienced a variety of academic subjects taught through CLIL will have a unique perspective on relative efficacy. To my knowledge, CLIL perceptions research has not yet examined these potential subject-specific differences.

## Research Question

The literature review has identified a number of gaps in current CLIL perception research. The examination of the evidence both for and against the efficacy of CLIL indicates that the results remain inconclusive. Contradictory findings leave room for additional research that approaches the problem from multiple angles (Pérez Cañado, 2016b) including examination of specific national and educational contexts. This review has also revealed the likelihood of differences in CLIL efficacy across academic subjects. Finally, CLIL perception research has examined a number of aspects of CLIL but has not yet targeted student perceptions of CLIL efficacy. Therefore, this paper focuses on CLIL efficacy across subjects through the lens of student perceptions. It strives to add to the growing evidence provided by stakeholder perceptions of CLIL and to focus in particular on learners' perceptions of CLIL efficacy at a Korean public secondary school. To do so, it aims to investigate the following research question:

RQ1. Do Korean secondary students' perceptions of CLIL efficacy differ across academic subjects?

It seems likely that subject differences will be apparent in the measures of students' perceptions since these have been found in previous outcomes-based research. However, as contradictory results have been uncovered for specific subjects and the impact of difficulty and abstraction has not been resolved, it is unclear which subjects will be perceived as more or less effective.

## METHOD

### Basic Research Design

This study's approach was influenced by the current state of research on secondary school CLIL in Korea. Worldwide, recent research on perceptions of CLIL has been strongly qualitative. This makes sense for areas like Europe with extensive CLIL research. However, the sparsity of research on CLIL for the Korean secondary school context makes a

quantitative approach more appropriate for this project. The systematic focus and rigor and well-developed statistical analyses of quantitative methods (Dörnyei, 2007) make them appropriate for this initial exploration of perceptions of secondary-level CLIL in Korea. This study avoids the oft-used CLIL versus non-CLIL design, thereby avoiding experimental and control group selection bias problems (Pérez Cañado, 2016b). By instead focusing on data that can be gathered within a single group, the design removes concerns of group heterogeneity across motivational, academic preparedness, or socioeconomic dimensions. This kind of within-CLIL group focus is also seen in the CLIL perceptions research of Rubtcova and Kaisarova (2016) and Roiha (2019). The former study examined current and prospective students' general perceptions of CLIL, while the latter conducted 20-year retrospective interviews with former CLIL students. The present study takes a slightly different tack by including both current students and recent former students.

Subject differences in perceived CLIL efficacy are an important aspect of this study. Some research has incidentally uncovered influences of subject difference on CLIL perceptions in the course of their investigations (e.g., Yang & Gosling, 2014); the present study differs in that it specifically checks for differences across academic subjects. In the interest of focused data collection and analysis, this study was purposefully limited to students as opposed to a wider set of stakeholders (cf. Hüttner et al., 2013; Moreno de Diezmas, 2019). It also includes a balance of both content and language efficacy in response to the general trend within CLIL research to focus more on language goals. The key measurements required to address the research question are perceptions of CLIL efficacy. The study included both current and former students to check for possible changes in perceptions brought on by the passage of time and the experience of putting learning to use. Current and former students provided ratings of perceived efficacy for academic content learning and language learning as well as perceived difficulty, all separated into six subject categories. The categories used were (a) economics, (b) politics and law, (c) history and geography, (d) English literature, (e) science, and (f) mathematics, following the target school's usual subject groupings.

The target school is one of numerous public "specialized" high schools in Korea. It focuses on social studies subjects as well as subject instruction through English in order to simultaneously increase English

abilities and subject content learning. Students apply to the school and are selected based on criteria including their middle school marks and an in-person interview. This leads to a student population with higher average academic strength and stronger English abilities compared to an average Korean public school. The school employs general public school teachers, who do not necessarily have pre-service CLIL training. Many teachers have had some professional development focusing on CLIL teaching, but the amount of CLIL experience and training varies across teachers. Some classes are taught by teams of native Korean- and native English-speaking teachers and some are taught solely by native Korean teachers. Most classes include a mixture of English and Korean instruction, though some are taught completely through Korean (e.g., Korean literature, Korean history). Participants were instructed to respond to the questionnaire based on their experience with English instruction in different subjects, regardless of the native language of the teacher(s). The fact that the participants received English instruction in various academic subjects puts them in a sound position to comment on the relative efficacy of CLIL across subjects.

### **Ordinal Data and Nonparametric Statistics**

Examinations of perceptions of L2-medium instruction have tended to be quite general and include aspects like motivation, the nature of CLIL, difficulty, learning preferences, language use in the classroom, and perceptions of students' learning (Lasagabaster, 2017b). Some have included individual items related to perceptions of efficacy. For example, Joe and Lee (2013) use "EMI is helpful for my major studies" (p. 204) and Pérez Cañado (2016a) has a prompt measuring general content knowledge improvement.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, no specific validated measure for perceptions of CLIL efficacy that could be used across academic subjects. Therefore, the majority of the data collected for this study were gathered through individual Likert items that directly elicited participants' perceptions and produced ordinal data. It would be inappropriate to attempt to produce interval data by combining multiple Likert items in the absence of previous validation work, so analyses were conducted directly on the ordinal data, requiring the use of nonparametric statistics (Kuzon et al., 1996). While nonparametric statistics are less common (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2002), they are the appropriate choice and should not be considered "second-best" when

used with appropriately matching data (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 228). Therefore nonparametric statistical tests were used in the analyses, where fitting.

## **Data Collection Instrument**

The survey method was employed to allow for efficient collection of a large amount of information, including from former students whose physical locations varied. The prompts for the main data collection section were constructed to elicit direct evaluations from participants on the efficacy of the various subject categories. They were divided into content learning, English language learning, and difficulty sections, each including the examined subject categories. The prompts were presented in both English and Korean to promote comprehension and reduce the potential for ambiguity in either language. A draft was piloted with four current students and one former student. Improvements were made to survey items based on this feedback. The instrument was composed of four pages aimed at general demographic information, educational experience, perceptions of CLIL efficacy, and amount of English instruction in the CLIL program. Efficacy perception data was collected using 5-point Likert scale items that ranged from 1 (*not at all effective*) to 5 (*very effective*). Participants ranked CLIL efficacy for learning of academic content and English language learning for each of the six subject categories. The difficulty of studying each through English was also ranked using Likert items that ranged from 1 (*not difficult at all*) to 5 (*very difficult*). Therefore, higher ranks indicate more effective or more difficult, respectively. The questionnaire for current students is provided as Appendix A. The version for former students replaced grade with graduation year.

## **Participant Recruitment and Basic Sample Characteristics**

The questionnaire was administered online. An invitation to participate and survey URL link was posted in two groups for former students on a social media website. Current students were invited in person through short announcements in their classrooms, followed by an offer of slips of paper with the participation URL. This allowed current students to consider and decide whether to participate by completing the questionnaire online in their own time, exactly as for the former

students. Two weeks later, the author posted reminders in the online groups and reminded the classes of current students in person of their option to participate.

The final sample of convenience included 123 people, 100 female and 23 male. The student population of the school is similarly skewed at approximately 80% female. A larger number of current students responded relative to former students. The school has three grades: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. First-grade students were not invited to participate as they had only been at the school for three months prior to data collection and therefore had very little experience with the program. Within the sample, 38% of the current students were in second grade and 62% were in third grade. Thirty of the former students (57%) had left the program within two years of the survey administration, with the others extending as far back as six years earlier. Table 1 shows the number of current and former students in the sample by gender.

**TABLE 1. Counts and Percentages of Current and Former Students by Sex**

Gender	Current Students	Former Students	Total
Female	53 (43.1)	47 (38.2)	100 (81.3)
Male	17 (13.8)	6 (4.9)	23 (18.7)
Total	70 (56.9)	53 (43.1)	

## Results and Discussion

This section will first set the stage by describing necessary demographic analyses before turning to address the research question.

### Demographic Analyses

Initial statistical analyses were conducted to compare students who were currently in the program with former students, as well as female with male students. Forty-two current students (60.9%) and 37 former students (69.8%) reported not having experience with CLIL programs before entering high school. A chi-square test confirmed there was no statistically significant relationship between these variables,  $\chi^2 (1, 122) = 1.050, p = .305$ . For time spent living in English-speaking countries

prior to starting high school, 68.1% of current and 67.9% of former students reported having no experience. Again, no significant difference was found when comparing these two,  $\chi^2(1, 122) = 0.0005, p = .982$ . This strongly suggests that for these variables the current and former students in the sample had comparable educational experience prior to starting secondary school.

CLIL programs in Korea and beyond do not necessarily include target language instruction only (Hüttner et al., 2013) and the amount of English language instruction could influence perceptions of CLIL efficacy. Therefore, respondents reported the amount they studied through English for each subject category (as a percentage). Inferential statistics revealed that current and former students did not report statistically significant differences in English instruction for any subject except mathematics. Current students reported less English instruction in their math classes relative to former students,  $t(116.5, 119) = 4.689, p < .001$  (corrected for inequality of variances). Means and standard deviations for reported English instruction by subject category are provided as Table 2. Overall, these analyses demonstrate that current and former students shared similar educational experience pre-secondary school as well as amount of English instruction in the CLIL program under investigation.

**TABLE 2. Reported Percentage of English Instruction by Subject Category**

Subject Category	Current Students		Former Students	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Economics	55.8	18.4	58.8	16.5
Politics & Law	50.4	21.0	44.5	20.2
History & Geography	44.5	20.9	48.5	19.5
English Literature	92.8	10.1	88.6	16.1
Science	50.9	22.4	53.9	17.8
Mathematics*	27.1	21.1	42.8	15.3

*Note.* \*  $p < .001$

It was also necessary to test for potential differences in perceptions of efficacy and difficulty across current and former students. The presence of considerable differences would have necessitated separate analysis when approaching the research question. Mann-Whitney tests

were used to compare the perception ratings of the two groups, revealing 4 of 18 comparisons to be statistically significant. A summary of the statistical results is provided as Appendix B. The two groups shared broadly similar perceptions of the subjects based on the small number of significant differences and their effect sizes. Therefore, the main statistical tests were conducted on the sample as a whole, without differentiating current and former students.

Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests were also conducted on all content, language, and difficulty ratings to compare the 100 females and 23 males to check for potential gender differences. Males rated the study of English literature through CLIL as significantly more difficult than did females,  $U(107) = 822.5$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $r = .196$ . The effect size was small (Ellis, 2009), meaning that while there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings, the actual effective difference was not large. It appears that the females' and males' ratings were strongly consistent, as this was the only significant difference among the 18 ratings and the effect size was small.

### **Perceptions by Subject**

Efficacy and difficulty ratings for each subject category were compared to address the research question. These tests were conducted without differentiating current and former students or females and males based on the demographic analyses above. The ordinal data necessitated the use of nonparametric statistics, starting with Friedman's two-way analysis of variance by ranks. This test can indicate whether or not differences exist, but not precisely where those differences are found. Therefore, Wilcoxon post-hoc tests were conducted on any statistically significant results to reveal which subjects were perceived differently.

The statistical results for content learning, language learning, and difficulty by subject are presented as Table 3. All three exhibited statistically significant differences with  $p$ -values below .001, indicating that students perceived differences in CLIL efficacy across different academic subjects. Wilcoxon post-hoc tests were conducted for all individual pairings to locate specific differences. Six subject categories produced 15 pairwise comparisons, and therefore 15 Wilcoxon tests were conducted for each of the content learning, language learning, and difficulty data sets. When determining the statistical significance of these post-hoc tests, a Bonferroni correction (Kuzon et al., 1996) was employed,

reducing the original *p*-value cutoff from .05 to .003.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the highlights discussed for the remainder of this section, a full list of statistical results for all post-hoc comparisons has been provided as Appendix C.

**TABLE 3. Perception Ratings by Subject Category - Friedman’s Test Results**

	Content Learning Efficacy	Language Learning Efficacy	Difficulty
<i>N</i>	108	109	107
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	232.5	258.3	29.3
<i>df</i>	5	5	5
<i>p</i> -value	< .001	< .001	< .001

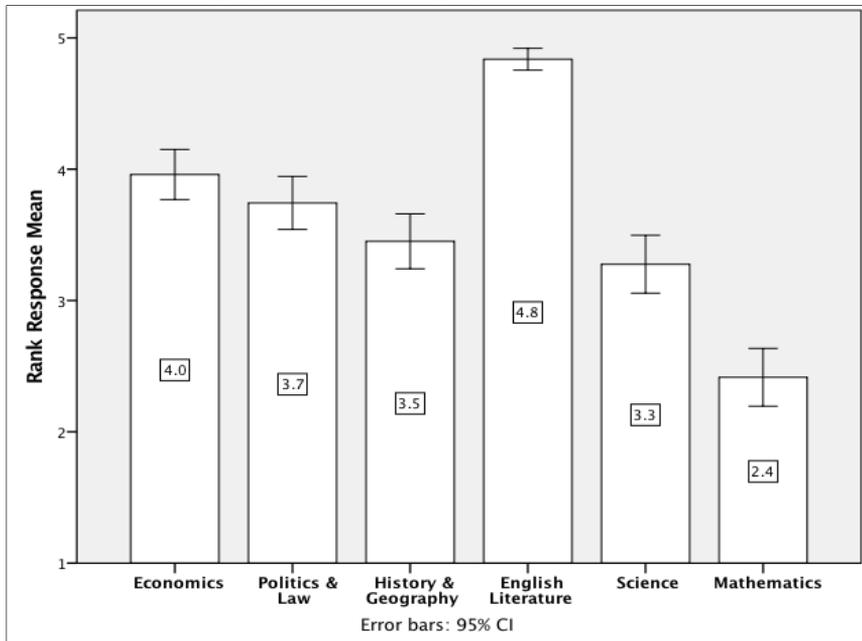
Means for ordinal data do not hold the same meaning that they do for interval data, and it is important to note that the nonparametric statistical tests used herein do not utilize means or standard deviations. However, the means can present a more nuanced visual representation of the rank data as opposed to median scores. To this end, rank means for CLIL content learning are provided graphically (see Figure 1) for reference. The Wilcoxon post-hoc results indicated a lack of statistically significant differences in ratings for economics–politics & law, politics & law–history & geography, and history & geography–science. All other comparisons resulted in statistically significant differences. Of particular note was CLIL’s rating as more effective for English literature than for any other subject category. In addition, CLIL was perceived as less effective for learning mathematics content relative to all other categories.

Wilcoxon post-hoc results for language learning produced similar results. Means by subject category are presented as Figure 2. This round of tests indicated a lack of significant differences in comparisons of economics–history & geography, and politics & law–history & geography. These results may indicate a general level of perceived efficacy for social studies subjects as a whole. The same pattern is apparent in the content learning results above. All other comparisons were significantly different. The large number of statistical differences match the findings for content learning, including the fact that CLIL was perceived as more effective for English literature and less effective for mathematics compared to all other subject categories. One additional difference in this group was science, which differed significantly from all

other categories. CLIL was perceived as more effective for science than for mathematics but less effective relative to the other subjects.

Finally, post-hoc tests were conducted on perceptions of difficulty. While these comparisons do not speak directly to the research question, previous research suggests they may assist in interpreting the efficacy findings. Difficulty response means by subject category are provided as Figure 3. Few statistically significant differences were found, showing a divergence of the difficulty and efficacy results. Learning mathematics through CLIL was perceived to be significantly easier than economics, English literature, and science. In addition, CLIL science was judged as more difficult than history and geography. The other pairwise comparisons were not significantly different. The fact that the difficulty rankings cluster near 3 (the midpoint of the Likert scale items) with few statistically significant differences suggests a general level of perceived moderate difficulty for most subjects.

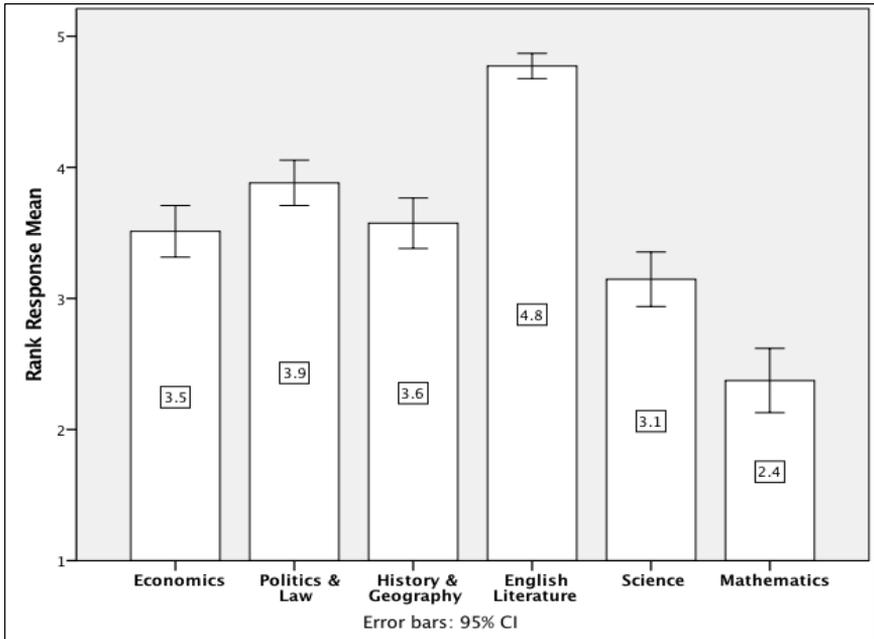
**FIGURE 1. Mean Rankings of Perceived CLIL Efficacy for Content Learning by Subject Category**



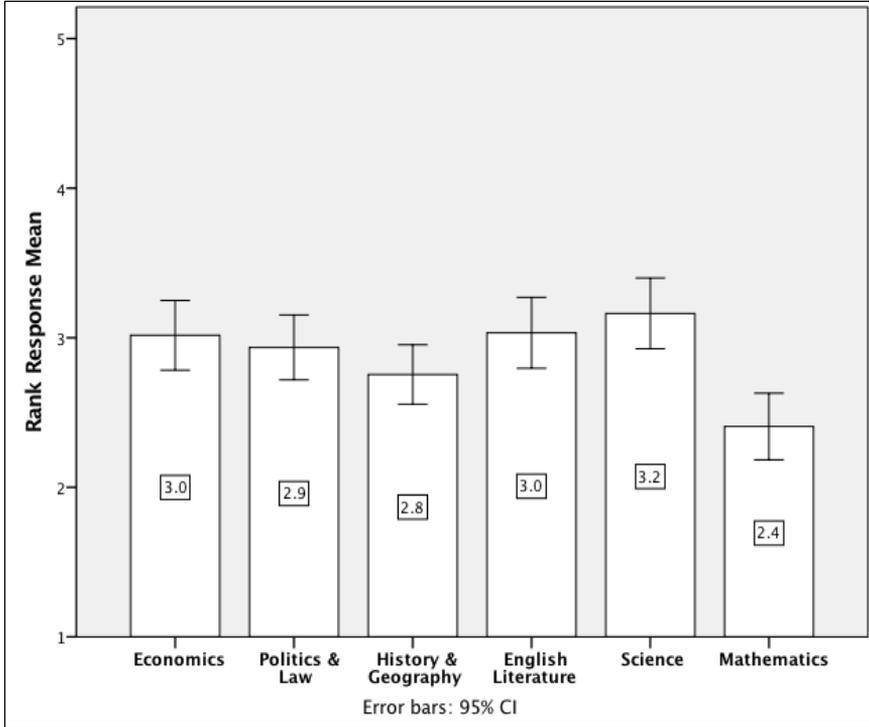
Note. Confidence intervals are included only to give a broad sense of the variance across participants' rankings; see text for cautions about using parametrics with ordinal data.

In summary, current and former students appeared to have very similar pre-secondary educational experience and amount of English instruction within the CLIL program. Current and former students also shared similar perceptions of CLIL efficacy. Examining the sample as a whole, many significant differences in perceptions of efficacy were identified across academic subjects, though few were identified for perceived difficulty. Specifically, CLIL was seen to be particularly effective for English literature and much less effective for mathematics and science. Social studies categories received parallel, mildly positive evaluations.

**FIGURE 2. Mean Rankings of Perceived CLIL Efficacy for Language Learning by Subject Category**



**FIGURE 3. Mean Rankings of Perceived Difficulty by Subject Category**



The findings of this study indicate that these secondary learners did not perceive CLIL to be equally effective for all academic subjects, further undercutting the one-size-fits-all approach to subject selection (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014). There were many differences in perceived CLIL efficacy across subjects and few differences in perceived difficulty. The findings suggest four tiers of perceived CLIL efficacy that held for both English language and content learning. CLIL study of English literature was perceived to be most effective, followed by social studies categories, then science, and finally mathematics. The fact that the three social studies categories received consistent ratings could support treating them as a single category in future research.

The lower perceived efficacy for mathematics and science dovetails with the suggestion in the literature that the more abstract nature of those subjects could reduce CLIL efficacy in relation to other subjects (Kang et al., 2010), as well as with Swain’s (1996a) speculation that a higher

L2 threshold could be needed for successful study of mathematics and science through CLIL. However, this interpretation is complicated by the findings on difficulty. CLIL for mathematics was seen as less effective but also less difficult relative to other subjects. This does not seem to fit with the suggested explanations that dealing with more abstract concepts or requiring higher language abilities increase difficulty and thereby reduce efficacy. Further complicating the interpretation is the fact that CLIL for science was perceived as more difficult and more effective than mathematics but also more difficult and less effective than the social studies subjects. This clearly indicates that if there is a relationship between perceptions of efficacy and difficulty, it is not a simple one-way relationship. This issue requires more detailed investigation, possibly including qualitative methods, to determine why the subjects were perceived this way by Korean CLIL students. The findings clearly leave open the possibility that efficacy may differ across subjects for reasons other than difficulty and level of abstraction.

## CONCLUSIONS

The debate over CLIL efficacy continues. Existing research seems to suggest that it can be effective but that its success cannot be automatically assumed. The results of this and other studies indicate that more attention towards *how* CLIL is implemented would be beneficial. It is probable that CLIL success depends greatly on factors including the degree and nature of collaboration between teachers (Pavon Vazquez, 2018), specific national implementation differences (Goris et al. 2013), and the selection of academic subjects to be taught through the L2. Accordingly, the main implication of the results of this study relates to the selection of CLIL subjects. The positive perceptions of efficacy for English literature and social studies courses appears to support their continued instruction through CLIL in Korean secondary education. Although additional research should be conducted before major action is taken, it is possible that changes to CLIL instruction for subjects that were perceived less positively may improve both perceived and actual efficacy. As this was an initial quantitative exploration of this issue for Korean secondary students, specific potential changes cannot be presented here but could be a focus for future research efforts. Further, if findings of significant differences in efficacy are consistently detected

in additional research, it is possible that subjects including science and mathematics would in fact be more effectively taught exclusively through the L1 in the Korean secondary context and changes to this effect may be warranted.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This preliminary investigation into Korean secondary students' perceptions of CLIL efficacy is limited in several ways. The cross-sectional design hinders exploration of CLIL's impact on students' future academic and employment outcomes. Another limitation is the lack of triangulation of methods. Although the quantitative approach matched the limited research question of this study, in-depth qualitative interviews with current and former students could unlock a deeper understanding of the nature of their perceptions of CLIL and provide insight into why students perceived CLIL as they did. The fact that students were free to decide whether to accept the invitation to participate could also introduce bias; the overall positive views of CLIL expressed could have resulted from students who enjoyed the program being more likely to respond, for example. It is difficult to see how this could lead to the relative differences reported across subjects, but the potential for an unidentified influence of the method of participant recruitment should not be ignored. The design was also limited in that it did not examine learners' perceptions of L1-medium instruction. While it is valuable to examine perceptions of CLIL efficacy in isolation, it is also necessary to explore wider perception data. An examination of relative perceptions of L1- and L2-medium instruction by academic subject could further deepen our understanding of which subjects students feel are best approached through CLIL and which are not. Finally, although these participants need to express their knowledge and abilities through Korean as well as English, perceptions of CLIL's impact on L1 abilities or learning were not examined in this study. The concerns about L1 abilities expressed by students, parents, and educators in the CLIL literature (e.g., Lasagabaster, 2017a; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015) could also trouble the Korean recipients of CLIL. Understanding these perceptions could inform decisions on which subjects should be taught through CLIL and the amount of L1 and L2 instruction that would best serve CLIL students in this context.

## Further Research

In addition to the research needed to compensate for the limitations of this study, it could be helpful to examine subject-specific perceptions of CLIL efficacy in the wider secondary Korean CLIL context to evaluate the degree to which the findings apply more generally. As well, research that employs both perception data and objective measures of outcomes in subject-related postsecondary education and employment of former CLIL students could be beneficial. While it is likely that perceptions of efficacy broadly reflect actual efficacy, they may also be influenced by additional factors. For example, sunk cost effects may lead students to overestimate the efficacy of their studies to justify their investments of time and effort. Additional research including other measures of outcomes in this context could contribute to the interpretation of the findings of this study and could help identify the existence and nature of relationships between perceived and actual CLIL efficacy. These additional lines of research could inform potential modifications to CLIL programs within Korea and elsewhere, including the academic subject selection component, enabling context-dependent research-based CLIL programs to better accomplish their dual goals of content and language learning.

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## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Lialikhova (2019) grouped students into high-, mid-, and low-achievement groups based on L2 (English) academic grades. Fung and Yip (2014) grouped students into high-, medium-, and low-ability groups based on their academic performance for the subject of physics specifically.
- <sup>2</sup> “5. Mi conocimiento de los contenidos de las asignaturas impartidas en inglés ha mejorado debido a mi participación en un programa bilingüe” (Pérez Cañado, 2016a, p. 102). [Electronic translation: 5. My knowledge of the contents of the subjects taught in English have improved due to my participation in the bilingual program.]
- <sup>3</sup> A  $p$  of .05 divided by 15 pairwise comparisons results in a corrected  $p$ -value cut-off of .003. This corrected  $p$ -value cutoff is used for all reported Wilcoxon post-hoc tests.

## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

#### Demographic Information [page 1]

Sex / 성별

- Female / 여성
- Male / 남성

Grade / 학년

- 2nd Grade / 2 학년
- 3rd Grade / 3 학년

Planned Major in University / 지망하는 대학교 전공

- Economics (경제)
- Politics / Law (정치 / 법학)
- History / Geography (역사 / 지리)
- English Literature, English Language (영문학, 영어)
- Science (과학)
- Math (수학)
- Other (기타) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Educational Experience [page 2]

Track in high school / 고등학교 계열:

- Domestic Track (국내반)
- International Track (국제반)
- Both. I switched tracks (둘다 경험이 있다)

Years lived in English-speaking country before high school / 고등학교 다니기 전에 영어권 국가에서 살았던 경험:

- no experience (경험이 없다)
- less than one year (1년 이하)
- 1-2 years (1년 - 2년)
- more than 2 years - less than 5 years (2년 이상 - 5년 이하)
- 5 years - 10 years (5년 - 10년)
- more than 10 years (10년 이상)

Did you have experience studying academic subjects (like science, social studies, math, etc.) in English BEFORE you started high school? / 고등학교를 다니기 전에 영어로 과학, 사회, 수학 같은 교과목을 공부한 경험이 있습니까?

Yes (있다)

No (없다)

If “Yes,” please provide brief details of that experience. For example, which subjects did you study? In which country did you study? Was this elementary school, middle school, or *hagwon*?

### Beliefs About Efficacy [page 3]

For students in Korea, studying subjects like social studies, math, and science in English is intended to help students learn both the subject content and the English language related to the subject. This is intended to prepare students to study those subjects in university and/or to work in jobs related to those subjects in the future.

한국의 학생들에게 사회, 수학, 과학과 같은 교과목들을 영어로 다루는 것은 교과 내용뿐만 아니라 관련된 영어 학습까지 모두 병행할 수 있도록 돕는 것입니다. 이는 학생들로 하여금 미래에 대학에서 해당 교과를 심화 하여 공부하거나 관련된 진로로 나아가기 위한 역량을 다질 수 있도록 한 것입니다.

The questions below ask about your beliefs about your study of academic subjects using English in high school.

\*\* In your opinion, how effective is it to study these subjects in English to prepare you to study in university or to work at a job? / 귀하의 의견으로는, 대학에서 공부하거나 직무를 잘 수행하기 위해 영어로 이 과목들을 공부하는 것이 얼마나 효과적입니까?

- How effective is it for learning the content of the subject? / 다음의 과목 ‘내용들’을 영어로 배우는 것이 얼마나 효과적이라고 생각하십니까?



**Politics / Law (정치 / 법학)** [Note. Identical scales not shown here to conserve space.]

**History / Geography (역사 / 지리)**

**English Literature / English Language (영문학 / 영어)**

**Science (과학)**

**Math (수학)**

- How effective is it for improving English skills and learning the **English language** related to the subject? / 다음의 과목들을 영어로 공부하는 것이 귀하의 영어 실력을 향상시키는 데 얼마나 효과적이라고 생각하십니까?



**Politics / Law (정치 / 법학)** [Note. Identical scales not shown here to conserve space.]

**History / Geography (역사 / 지리)**

**English Literature / English Language (영문학 / 영어)**

**Science (과학)**

**Math (수학)**

- How **difficult** is it to study these subjects in English in high school? / 고등학교에서 영어로 이 과목들을 공부하는 것이 얼마나 어렵습니까?



**Politics / Law (정치 / 법학)** [Note. Identical scales not shown here to conserve space.]

**History / Geography (역사 / 지리)**

English Literature / English Language (영문학 / 영어)  
Science (과학)  
Math (수학)

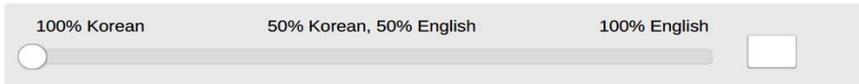
**Amount of Study in English (in High School); Final Efficacy Opinions**  
[page 4]

- When you study these subjects in high school, approximately how much of that study happens in English?  
[0 means 100% Korean, 100 means 100% English in class]

고등학교에서 이 과목들을 공부할 때, 수업이 어느정도나 영어로 이루어 집니까?

[0 = 100% 한국어수업, 100 = 100% 영어 수업을 의미함]

Economics (경제)



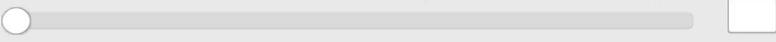
[Note. Identical scales not shown here for the following five items to conserve space.]

Politics / Law (정치 / 법학)  
History / Geography (역사 / 지리)  
English Literature, English Language (영문학, 영어)  
Science (과학)  
Math (수학)

- How effective do you believe studying in English is for special purpose high school students in Korea? / 한국의 특수목적 고등학교 학생들이 수학, 과학, 경제등 같은 과목들을 영어로 공부하는 것이 얼마나 효과적이라고 생각하십니까?

- When studying the subject of YOUR planned university major, what mixture of languages do you believe would be most effective for students in specialized Korean high schools? / 특수목적 고등학생들이 당신의 지망하는 대학 전공 과목을 공부할 때 가장 적합한 언어의 혼합은 무엇이라고 생각하십니까?

100% Korean      50% Korean, 50% English      100% English



- Is there anything else you would like to express about your opinion of studying academic subjects through English at specialized high schools in Korea? / 특수목적 고등학교에서 교과목을 영어로 공부하는 것에 대하여 다른 의견 이 있습니까?

## APPENDIX B

### Perception Ratings of Current and Former Students

**TABLE B1. Perception Ratings of Current and Former Students by Subject – Mann-Whitney Test Results**

Subject Category	Content Learning Efficacy		Language Learning Efficacy		Difficulty	
	<i>U</i> Score	<i>p</i> -value	<i>U</i> Score	<i>p</i> -value	<i>U</i> Score	<i>p</i> -value
Economics	1438.0*	.023	1768.5	.646	1263.0**	.002
Politics & Law	1408.0	.670	1488.5	.941	1362.5	.578
History & Geography	1659.5	.365	1751.0	.676	1810.5	.923
English Literature	1835.0	.861	1590.0*	.046	1592.5	.170
Science	1767.5	.646	1832.5	.906	1625.0	.230
Mathematics	1194.5***	< .001	1494.5	.056	1717.0	.467

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**TABLE B2. Effect Sizes of the Statistically Significant Mann-Whitney Results**

Subject	Difference	Effect Size
Economics	Former students perceived CLIL to be more effective for content learning compared to current students.	$r = .204$ (small <sup>1</sup> )
Mathematics	Former students perceived CLIL to be more effective for content learning.	$r = .314$ (intermediate)
English Lit.	Current students perceived CLIL to be more effective for language learning.	$r = .180$ (small)
Economics	Current students perceived CLIL economics to be more difficult.	$r = .279$ (intermediate)

Note. <sup>1</sup>Following Ellis (2009).

## APPENDIX C

### Full Statistical Results of Content, Language, and Difficulty Rating Post-hoc Tests

**TABLE C1. Pairings Without Statistically Significant Differences**

Content Efficacy			Language Efficacy		
Pair	Z	p-value	Pair	Z	p-value
PL = EC	1.910	.056	HG = EC	.399	.690
PL = HG	2.361	.018	HG = PL	2.875	.004
SC = HG	1.483	.138			

*Note.* EC = Economics, PL = Politics & Law, HG = History & Geography, EN = English Literature, SC = Science, MA = Mathematics.

**TABLE C2. Pairings With Statistically Significant Differences**

Perceived Content Efficacy			Perceived Language Efficacy		
Pair	Z	p-value	Pair	Z	p-value
HG ≠ EC	4.165	< .001	PL ≠ EC	4.269	< .001
EN ≠ EC	7.060	< .001	EN ≠ EC	8.174	< .001
SC ≠ EC	4.706	< .001	SC ≠ EC	3.521	< .001
MA ≠ EC	8.029	< .001	MA ≠ EC	6.997	< .001
EN ≠ PL	7.464	< .001	EN ≠ PL	7.312	< .001
SC ≠ PL	3.038	.002	SC ≠ PL	5.835	< .001
MA ≠ EN	9.199	< .001	MA ≠ PL	7.244	< .001
MA ≠ SC	6.244	< .001	EN ≠ HG	8.291	< .001
MA ≠ PL	6.780	< .001	SC ≠ HG	3.746	< .001
MA ≠ HG	6.734	< .001	MA ≠ HG	6.937	< .001
EN ≠ HG	8.225	< .001	SC ≠ EN	8.552	< .001
SC ≠ EN	8.446	< .001	MA ≠ EN	8.843	< .001
			MA ≠ SC	6.207	< .001

**TABLE C3. Pairings Without Statistically Significant Differences: Perceived Difficulty**

<b>Pair</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
PL = EC	.147	.883
HG = EC	1.985	.047
EN = EC	.205	.838
SC = EC	1.033	.302
SC = EN	.781	.435
HG = PL	1.233	.218
EN = PL	.168	.867
SC = PL	1.322	.183
EN = HG	2.519	.012
MA = HG	2.591	.010

**TABLE C4. Pairings With Statistically Significant Differences: Perceived Difficulty**

<b>Pair</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
MA ≠ EC	4.005	< .001
MA ≠ PL	3.114	.002
SC ≠ HG	3.152	.002
MA ≠ EN	3.502	< .001
MA ≠ SC	5.389	< .001

# Reading Idiomatic Language: A Comparative Eye-Tracking Study of Native English Speakers and Native Korean Speakers

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Idiomatic language is thought to be difficult for non-native (L2) English speakers because of its non-reducible meaning, yet empirical research of in-the-moment reading behavior of idiomatic phrases by L2 learners compared to native speakers is still developing. This quantitative study used eye-tracking technology to compare the reading behavior of 32 native English speakers and 26 native Korean speakers at the university level as they read idiomatic and literal phrases within well-formed sentences. Results revealed that native Korean speakers read both literal and idiomatic sentences more slowly than native English speakers. Additionally, native Korean speakers read idiomatic sentences more slowly than literal sentences in a measure of total time, but not in early reading processes. Variables related to idiom familiarity and frequency were also investigated and showed that frequency was positively associated with longer reading times for literal phrases. These findings suggest that Korean speakers took longer to process English idioms as lexical units but that frequency made literal phrases more effortful for both groups.

*Keywords:* idioms, eye-tracking, Korean, English, literal, reading, processing

## INTRODUCTION

Idiomatcity allows a set phrase to take on a meaning that extends beyond what is literally conveyed by its component elements (Cooper, 1999, p. 233). Idioms such as *think outside the box* or *take a step in the right direction* are types of idiomatic phrases frequently used in English, not only in casual conversation but also in academic and professional settings (Ramonda, 2016; Wray, 2000). They can serve a wide range of communicative functions, including transitioning between topics, summarizing main ideas, showing agreement or disagreement, and adding emphasis to a statement (Drew & Holt, 1998). Such versatility demonstrates the practical use of idiomatic language in English and reflects the notion that interactions in a culture are connected to language (Jiang, 2000; Yagiz & Izadpanah, 2013).

While idioms are the most obvious examples of idiomatic language, this umbrella term can also include phrasal verbs (Erman, 2007; Siyanova-Chanturia & Martinez, 2015; Wray, 2000), both of which can be used idiomatically and literally. Idioms are defined as multi-word units (see Martinez & Murphy, 2011) that have a figurative meaning as well as a possible literal one: *A piece of cake* can be used literally to describe a portion of food or figuratively to say that something is easy to accomplish. Phrasal verbs are defined as “verb + preposition collocates” such as “I’m waiting for the news to *sink in*” (idiomatic) or “There is a *sink in* my kitchen” (literal).

While researchers generally agree that idioms can be difficult for L2 learners to acquire (Boers, 2003; Cooper, 1998; Irujo, 1986; Martinez & Murphy, 2011; Ramonda, 2016), strategy use, culture, and proficiency are thought to affect idiom acquisition (Boers et al., 2004; Irujo, 1986; Martinez & Murphy, 2011; Vanderniet, 2015; Vanlancker-Sidits, 2003; Yagiz & Izadpanah, 2013). For instance, Cooper (1999) found that L2 readers used many strategies when encountering idioms, such as paraphrasing and referring to their native language. Native language can be especially helpful since idioms translated from the L1 or that occur in both languages can be more quickly accessed in the L2 than unfamiliar idioms (Carrol & Conklin, 2017). Nevertheless, idioms can vary culturally; French has a greater number of food-related idioms while English has more idioms related to sports and sailing. Thus, differences in cultural idioms may cause some difficulties for language learners, which teachers should be attuned to. Language proficiency also seems to

mitigate idiomatic learning. Vanlancker-Sidits (2003) found that native English speakers differed from fluent non-native and ESL students in terms of idiom recognition via prosodic cues. In addition, Vanderniet (2015) found that the acquisition of idioms was more closely related to speaking proficiency than reading or writing proficiency. Thus, comprehension of idiomatic language can be a product of strategic learning, cultural understanding, and language proficiency. Nevertheless, researchers continue to examine the processing costs of idiomatic language, since it is believed that idiomatic expressions, once encoded as such, should provide a processing advantage over similar strings of non-idiomatic phrases. Yet this is not always the case, particularly for L2 learners.

## **L2 Idiom Processing**

In terms of processing speed, L2 research has investigated whether idiomatic phrases are processed faster in an L1 or an L2 (Carrol & Conklin, 2014). One might predict a clear advantage for L1 idiom processing since L2 reading in general is slower than L1 reading (see Cop et al., 2015). To investigate idiom processing specifically, Underwood et al. (2004) found that L1 readers had fewer and shorter eye fixations than L2 readers when reading idiomatic words, showing that it took L1 readers less time to process individual words. Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) built on Underwood et al.'s study by reporting a greater variety of measurements and comparing idiomatic and literal phrases. Siyanova-Chanturia et al. found that L1 readers read more fluently than L2 readers, confirming Underwood et al.'s findings. Non-native speakers had longer first pass and overall reading times, more saccades, and longer fixation durations, likely indicating that it took more cognitive effort for them to process what they read.

Despite the ostensible language advantage on idiom processing, further research has shown a familiarity effect on idiom processing such that if learners are familiar with an L2 idiom, they have a processing advantage. Carrol et al. (2018) had non-native and native English-speaking participants rate idioms on familiarity and transparency and to guess the meaning from four different options. They found that familiarity was related to measures of transparency, suggesting that native and non-native speakers use similar patterns to derive the meaning from idioms. Carrol and Conklin (2017) used eye-tracking methods and

found that when reading Chinese idioms translated into English, Chinese participants showed an advantage which native English speakers did not have, suggesting that idioms may be stored as their own lexical and conceptual entry or as individual words with strong associative links. When parts of the idiom are accessed, this activates the idiom in the lexicon, even though it is translated into a different language. Activation allows for meaning recognition of an L1 phrase translated into the L2, giving a native-like advantage in processing (Carrol & Conklin, 2014). This activation of the L1 has also been supported in other research (Beck & Weber, 2016; Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2019).

A few studies have also demonstrated that L1 and L2 idiom processing are not different with respect to the proficiency level of readers. In their study, Beck and Weber (2016) primed participants with related or unrelated words, and then the participants read the idiom. Their results showed that highly proficient bilinguals did not process L2 idioms differently from native speakers. In their eye-tracking study, Carrol et al. (2016) found that highly proficient non-native English participants had an advantage on processing English idioms and Swedish idioms translated into English. Titone et al. (2015) found that bilingual idiom processing was very similar to native idiom processing and may be approached using the same theoretical models. The collected evidence suggests that L2 speakers generally process L2 text more slowly than native speakers, except when it comes to idioms, which can be processed no differently in an L2 by proficient readers provided that the idiom is familiar to the reader or translated from the L1.

## **Figurative Versus Literal Processing**

While researchers have long been interested in how readers process the idiomatic nature of figurative phrases (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Cooper, 1998; Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011; Underwood et al., 2004), there has been less research comparing figurative and literal versions of the same phrase. Carrol et al. (2016) found that Swedish non-native speakers of English with high levels of exposure, experience, and proficiency showed an advantage in reading idioms over literal phrases. Carrol and Conklin (2017) further found that native and non-native speakers of Chinese and English responded more quickly to idioms because of familiarity in comparison to control phrases, though the control phrases were not literal versions of idiomatic expressions. In

contrast to these studies, van Ginkel and Dijkstra (2019) found in a recent lexical decision task study that non-native Dutch speakers processed figurative and literal language the same as native speakers. These conflicting reports based on different methodologies show that questions still remain about the processing time of literal and idiomatic meanings of the same formulaic phrases among L2 learners. Understanding the cognitive processes involved with reading idiomatic language and literal equivalents is important for language teachers who must decide how and when and to what degree to utilize idiomatic language in instruction.

The collected research reviewed above demonstrates an idiomatic processing advantage among proficient L2 learners who are familiar with a particular idiom. Processing of unfamiliar idiomatic language may take longer for L2 readers, but it is unclear whether literal equivalents are processed faster. Additional research is needed to address this. Further, in many idiom studies, researchers have used highly selective criteria in choosing familiar or translated idioms, but we wanted to examine a varied sample of idiomatic language to determine a broader cross-section of “real world” language that learners might encounter and that teachers may need to present to students. Further, many idiom studies have examined European or Chinese languages with little attention paid to Korean learners of English, whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds may influence their access of idioms in unique ways. With these parameters in mind, the research questions we sought to answer are these:

- RQ1. To what extent do Korean ESL learners process idiomatic phrases differently from native English speakers?
- RQ2. To what extent do Korean ESL learners and native English speakers process idiomatic and literal phrases differently?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of 32 native (L1) speakers of English and 26 native speakers of Korean (L2) from South Korea who spoke English

as a second language, and all students studied at a large, four-year university in the western U.S. The L1 participants included 4 graduate students and 28 undergraduate students; 13 were female and 18 male, and their average age was 22. Five L1 participants considered themselves to be bilingual (Mandarin Chinese, German, and Spanish [3 participants]). The L2 participants included 4 graduate students and 22 undergraduates equally divided by sex with an average age of 23. Three L2 participants considered themselves English-Korean bilinguals. These participants were included in the Korean population because they had lived in South Korea for the majority of their lives and self-reported using Korean more than English on a daily basis when this study took place. On average, the L2 participants began learning English at age 10 and had 10 years of formal English study in a classroom. In their daily interactions, 8 of the participants used mostly English, 8 used mostly Korean, and 10 used English and Korean equally. Each participant met or exceeded one of the following English proficiency requirements: a TOEFL score of 80, an IELTS score of 6.5, a PTE score of 53, or an advanced or proficient Cambridge English rating. In order to participate in this study, participants were required to have normal or corrected-to-normal vision (glasses and contacts were acceptable).

## **Materials**

### **Selection of Sentences**

To compare idioms and literal sentences, sentence pairs were developed in which a formulaic phrase was used literally in one sentence and idiomatically in another (Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011; Titone & Connine, 1999; Underwood et al., 2004). This resulted in sentence pairs such as “This homework is a piece of cake” and “For dessert, I ate a piece of cake” (see Appendix for full list). Because some phrases are used primarily idiomatically while others are primarily literal, a pilot survey involving ten native speakers of English studying how to teach English as a second language at the graduate level ensured that both versions sounded natural. This procedure asked native speakers to evaluate whether the proposed sentences seemed natural and if they could easily identify the phrase that could be used idiomatically. Following open-ended feedback, the items were revised, which resulted in 30 idiomatic sentences paired with a literal version (60 sentences

total). The sentences were then balanced so that the idiomatic and literal versions were similar in length on average: 12.1 words for idioms and 11.8 words for literal sentences. A paired *t* test showed that this difference was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). A lexical analysis showed that a large majority of the words (97%) were taken from the first two thousand words on the BNC-COCA frequency list (Heatley et al., 2002). The remaining 3% included English-Korean cognates and words that college students could be reasonably expected to know (e.g., *airport*, *dessert*, *pencil*). All but four formulaic items had a phrase frequency of at least 11 per 100 million words based on values taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008) ( $M = 292$ ,  $SD = 532$ ; see Carrol & Conklin, 2019); *in the bag*, *hit below the belt*, *left a bad taste in his mouth*, and *was hard for him to swallow* occurred at 7, 6, 6, and 2 per 100 million, respectively. The location of the idiomatic phrases was varied so that they appeared at the sentence end position 12 times and the non-final position 18 times.

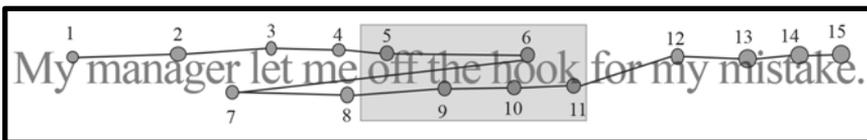
### Selection of Interest Areas and Measures

Eye-tracking researchers typically determine one or more theoretically driven areas of interest (AOI) from which to collect and analyze data in stimuli passages. For reading experiments, AOIs can focus on individual morphemes, words, phrases, or sentences according to the hypothesis of the experiment (Holmqvist et al., 2011). In past eye-tracking studies of L2 idiom processing, one study set each word as an AOI (Underwood et al., 2004), and the other focused on phrases (Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011). Underwood et al. tested the processing of the final word within idiomatic phrases, so AOIs were set for single words. While a single word approach can provide rich data about that word, without evaluating the formulaic phrase as a unit, it is difficult to distinguish word processing from idiom processing. In contrast, Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) investigated the processing of phrases before and after a key recognition point (i.e., the idiomatic key), so AOIs were set to collect data on a phrase level. According to the lexical representation hypothesis, idiomatic phrases are stored as single lexical items, necessitating a phrase-level approach to studying idiomatic processing (Swinney & Cutler, 1979). Although this approach is less straight forward than examining word-for-word processing, it nonetheless sets the idiomatic phrase as the unit of analysis rather than component words of that phrase. With that in mind, the present study followed the

example of Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) in focusing on phrase-level processing instead of single-word processing.

The study further focused on three measures of eye movement – dwell time, go-past time, and total time – as measures of idiomatic phrase reading and processing. These measures are explained in reference to Figure 1. Dwell time is the sum of all fixation durations the first time the target phrase is read and so includes fixations 5 and 6 in Figure 1. Dwell time is thought to indicate the initial processing of the set phrase and likely represents word recognition, not necessarily decisions about the idiomaticity of the phrase. Go-past time, which covers fixations 5–11, includes the dwell time plus the amount of time that a participant spends backtracking to re-read parts of the sentence that came *before* the idiomatic phrase. Such a measure combines idiom reading time with the time spent integrating the idiomatic or literal phrase into the sentence. Total time, including only fixations 5–6 and 9–11, is the total reading duration across all runs of the target phrase, indicating time necessary to fully comprehend the idiom or literal phrase itself.

**FIGURE 1. Illustration of Dwell Time, Go-Past Time, and Total Time Within a Given AOI**



### Apparatus

An SR Research Eyelink 1000 Plus system with a sampling rate of 1000 hz was used to measure eye movements. The participants sat at a fixed distance of 65 cm from the computer monitor and used a chin and forehead rest to reduce head movements. The sentences were displayed on a monitor with a resolution of 1600 x 900 DPI. The text size was adjusted so that approximately three letters was equivalent to 1° of the visual angle. The text was double-spaced, 18-point monospaced font and was centered on the screen.

## Procedure

All participants completed a questionnaire on their language learning background and personal information prior to beginning the eye-tracking portion of the study. Afterward, a researcher conducted a 9-point calibration and had participants read two practice sentences on the eye-tracker display to become familiar with the procedures and the equipment for the study. Following the practice sentences, the participants read the sentences in a randomized order. The participants read 60 sentences in total. The first 30 sentences consisted of 15 idioms and 15 literal sentences. After a recalibration of the eye tracker, the next 30 sentences were presented. These were the literal and idiomatic matches to the sentences presented in the first half so that if the phrase “a piece of cake” had been used literally in the first half of the experiment the phrase was presented as an idiomatic phrase in the second half of the experiment (and vice versa). They saw both the literal and idiomatic versions of the sentences, but they never saw two versions of the same sentence in succession. The order of these two blocks was counterbalanced across the participants.

Following the eye-tracking experiment, the participants were given a paper list of all of the sentences and asked to identify which sentences contained idiomatic phrases (i.e., had a possible figurative meaning). To ensure that they understood the task, one of the researchers gave a clear explanation of idiomatic expressions with example sentences and answered any questions. All of the participants verbally confirmed that they understood the instructions and examples. No one raised questions about words used in the sentences they saw during the eye-tracking portion of the experiment.

## RESULTS

All data were analyzed by using R (R CoreTeam, 2019) package lme4 (Bates et al., 2016) to fit mixed models for repeated measures to determine the effects of native language (English or Korean) and sentence type (idiomatic or literal sentence) on the dwell time, go-past time, and total time for the target phrases. All of these reading measures are reported in milliseconds.

The two variables included as fixed effects in all analyses reported below were native language and sentence type. Both variables were dummy coded, with English and idiomatic phrases as the baseline conditions, respectively. Some additional models were also fitted to investigate the possible influence of two potentially confounding variables: block order and phrase position. When block order (i.e., the first presentation of a phrase or second presentation of a phrase) was included in the model, there was a significant effect, but no significant interactions. In other words, all participants were faster later in the experiment (all  $p < .0006$ ), but this was independent of native language and sentence type (all interaction  $p > .46$ ). Similarly, when we included the phrase position (middle or end of sentence) as a variable, it revealed that participants spent more time on end-of-sentence phrases (all  $p < .0018$ ), but there was no interaction with native language or sentence type in any analyses (all interaction  $p > .17$ ). These results indicate that neither presenting the phrases more than once nor presenting some phrases at the end of the sentence influenced the overall pattern of the results reported below.

All models included by-participant and by-item intercepts. The random effects structure was maximal (Barr et al., 2013); random by-participant slopes for sentence type and by-item slopes for both native language and sentence type (as well as the interaction of the two) were included in all models. If a model failed to converge, the by-participant slope was removed. The  $p$ -values were obtained using the Satterthwaite approximation for degrees of freedom (Luke, 2017). All dependent variables were log transformed prior to analysis.

## Analysis of Dwell Time

The data were first analyzed to investigate the influence of native language and sentence type on dwell time. The effect for native language was statistically significant ( $b = 0.2$ ,  $SE = 0.062$ ,  $t = 3.22$ ,  $p = .0021$ ), indicating a shorter dwell time for native speakers of English ( $M = 754$ ,  $SD = 516$ ) compared to native speakers of Korean ( $M = 924$ ,  $SD = 4635$ ). The effect for sentence type was not significant ( $t = -0.47$ ,  $p = .64$ ) nor was the interaction effect ( $t = 0.27$ ,  $p = .79$ ).

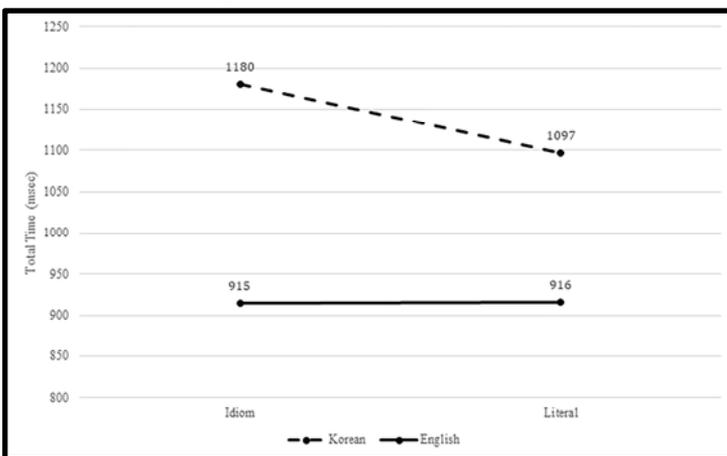
## Analysis of Go-Past Time

An analysis of the influence of native language and sentence type on go-past time found that the effect for native language was statistically significant ( $b = 0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.065$ ,  $t = 3.86$ ,  $p = .00029$ ), indicating a shorter go-past time for native speakers of English ( $M = 932$ ,  $SD = 786$ ) compared to native speakers of Korean ( $M = 1149$ ,  $SD = 873$ ). The effect for sentence type was not significant ( $t = 0.29$ ,  $p = .78$ ), nor was the interaction ( $t = -1.53$ ,  $p = .13$ ).

## Analysis of Total Time

An analysis of the influence of native language and sentence type on the total time found that the effect of native language was statistically significant ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.071$ ,  $t = 3.7$ ,  $p = .00049$ ), indicating a shorter total time for native speakers of English ( $M = 916$ ,  $SD = 670$ ) compared to native speakers of Korean ( $M = 1139$ ,  $SD = 755$ ). The effect for sentence type was not significant ( $b = -0.0055$ ,  $SE = 0.048$ ,  $t = -0.11$ ,  $p = .91$ ). However, the interaction effect was significant ( $b = -0.054$ ,  $SE = 0.026$ ,  $t = -2.04$ ,  $p = .046$ ), indicating that idiomatic phrases took longer than literal phrases to process among Korean speakers (see Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2. Total Time for Native English and Native Korean Speakers Reading Literal and Idiomatic Phrases**



## Post-Hoc Analyses of Idiom Frequency and Familiarity

Familiarity ratings for each critical phrase were obtained after the eye-tracking experiment by asking participants to rate each idiom on a 4-point familiarity scale (1 = *I do not know this idiom*, 2 = *I have seen or heard this idiom before, but I don't know what it means*, 3 = *I have heard this idiom before, and I think I know what it means*, 4 = *I know this idiom*); scores were averaged for each idiom. A few L2 participants said there was an idiom that they had never heard before, but they thought they knew what it meant. In this situation, they were instructed to mark 2 because they were guessing what the idiom meant. While this survey does not perfectly measure idiom knowledge, it can indicate whether participants might know a given idiom. The least familiar idiom was *in the bag* with a mean score of 2.91; all other idioms were scored above 3 ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.29$ ). The frequency of each phrase was obtained from the COCA corpus (Davies, 2008).

Familiarity was centered and z-scored prior to analysis, and frequency was log transformed and centered. Familiarity was not significant in any of the analyses, nor did it interact with native language or sentence type (all  $p > .34$ ). Frequency was significantly and positively associated with dwell time ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.031$ ,  $t = 2.61$ ,  $p = .015$ ), go-past time ( $b = 0.088$ ,  $SE = 0.027$ ,  $t = 3.23$ ,  $p = .0031$ ) and total time ( $b = 0.083$ ,  $SE = 0.025$ ,  $t = 3.34$ ,  $p = .0024$ ) for literal phrases, indicating that when a phrase was literal, higher frequency phrases took longer to read. These effects were qualified by significant interactions with sentence type in the three analyses of dwell time ( $b = -0.065$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = -2.19$ ,  $p = .037$ ), go-past time ( $b = -0.077$ ,  $SE = 0.026$ ,  $t = -2.97$ ,  $p = .006$ ) and total time ( $b = -0.072$ ,  $SE = 0.024$ ,  $t = -3$ ,  $p = .0056$ ), indicating that the effect of frequency always went away for the idiomatic phrases. In other words, frequency did not affect the processing time of formulaic phrases used idiomatically; however, when used literally, more frequent formulaic phrases required a longer processing time. There were no three-way interactions with native language (all  $p > .4$ ), indicating that the influence of frequency did not differ for the Korean and English speakers.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate differences in the way native Korean and native English speakers processed idiomatic and literal sentences. To answer the research questions, the overall reading times for native Korean and native English speakers were collected and compared and will be discussed below followed by a more specific discussion of main and interactional effects of language background and sentence type for dwell time, go-past time, and total time.

### Reading Differences for English and Korean Speakers

Overall, there was a difference between the way native Korean and native English speakers read sentences. In all reading measures – dwell time, go-past time, and total time – Korean speakers spent longer in both idiomatic and literal phrases than their native English counterparts. This comports with research that has found that language background affects reading time in general (e.g., Cop et al., 2015). As noted before, when dwell time, go-past time, and total time increase, it is thought to reflect an increase in the cognitive effort required to understand the text (Anson et al., 2009). Thus, these results suggest that the Korean speakers in this study, despite attending university alongside their native English-speaking peers, used more cognitive resources to process English sentences.

### Reading Differences by Language

To break these results down further, an analysis of dwell time revealed a main effect for L1, showing that native Korean speakers had significantly longer dwell times than native English speakers. This measure excludes any re-reading time and thus is typically associated with early reading processes such as word recognition (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). This suggests that native Korean speakers spent more time on word recognition in the early stages of processing language, a basic result found in other eye-tracking studies of L1/L2 reading (see Cop et al., 2015).

The analysis of go-past time also showed a significant main effect for L1, indicating that native Korean speakers spent more time re-reading

the sentence than native English speakers, ostensibly to integrate the phrase into the meaning of the sentence. Longer go-past times have been associated with later reading measures such as text comprehension (Conklin & Pellicer-Sánchez, 2016). The mean go-past time for native Korean speakers was 967.69 milliseconds, as opposed to 794.77 milliseconds for native English speakers. This amounts to approximately 22% longer go-past times for native Korean speakers. Like dwell time, this measure indicates that it took more time and likely more effort for native Korean speakers to read and understand phrases than for native English speakers.

The analysis of total time also showed a significant main effect for L1, indicating that native Korean speakers took more time to process phrases than did native English speakers. These results taken together support findings by Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) and Underwood et al. (2004), who found that L1 reading was faster and more fluent than L2 reading.

### **Reading Differences by Sentence Type**

There was not a significant main effect for sentence type (literal or idiomatic) or a significant interaction between L1 and sentence type for dwell time. This means that although there were differences in word recognition and decoding between native English and native Korean speakers, those differences were not contingent on whether a sentence contained a literal or idiomatic phrase, a finding that supports previous research showing no language advantage for idiom processing (Beck & Weber, 2016; van Ginkel & Dijkstra, 2019). However, this contrasts with Conklin and Schmitt (2008), who used global self-paced reading measures and found an overall advantage for idiom processing. It is possible that this contradiction reflects processing speed differences at various reading stages. While early reading is not different for idiomatic and literal constructions (suggesting a basic word recognition or decoding threshold), later reading differences, especially those associated with text integration, may show important differences.

Go-past time, or time spent moving out of the idiomatic or literal phrase into previous parts of the sentence – a behavior thought to reflect phrase integration – did not show differences by sentence type, since there was no significant main effect for sentence type nor a significant interaction between the L1 and sentence type. In other words, both

language groups used a similar cognitive effort to integrate idiomatic and literal constructions into their carrier sentences. Thus, an advantage for idiomatic processing does not appear to be associated with measures of early decoding or even text integration.

However, and in contrast to the previous measures, there was a significant main effect for sentence type for total time, meaning that there was a difference in the amount of time required to read literal and idiomatic units in total. There was also a significant interaction between L1 and sentence type for total time. As seen in Figure 2, the reading time for native English speakers decreased when reading idiomatic phrases, while the Korean speakers' reading time increased. This is not entirely unexpected since, as Carrol and Conklin's (2017) research pointed out, an L2 advantage in idiom processing occurs when idioms also exist in the L1 or have been translated from the L1 into the L2. However, since the idioms in the present study were not translated idioms from Korean, the current results confirm other L2 idiom studies showing an L1 advantage for idiom processing (Cieslicka, 2006; Siyanova-Chanturia et al., 2011). Total time is associated with later reading processes that are thought to include both the time spent decoding words and the time needed to process the meaning of the words in the context of the sentence (Anson et al., 2009; Conklin et al., 2018; Holmqvist et al., 2011). Thus, a lack of significant difference in early measures of idiom reading combined with differences in later reading suggest that L2 readers take more time processing the meaning of idiomatic language holistically (e.g., Conklin & Schmitt, 2008) but not in decoding or even in sentence integration (see Beck & Weber, 2016; van Ginkel & Dijkstra, 2019).

The implications of this result are that native Korean speakers processed literal meaning more quickly than figurative meaning among the diverse phrases measured in this study. These results support the findings of Siyanova-Chanturia et al. (2011) and Cieslicka (2006), which showed that non-native speakers of English did not have a cognitive processing advantage when reading idioms as compared to literal sentences. However, it should be noted that the interaction between L1 and sentence type for native Korean speakers was only significant in the late reading measure of total time. The two groups were similar in the earlier reading measures (i.e., dwell time and go-past time) but differed in the late reading measures involving comprehension as the participants processed the meaning of the idiomatic phrases in the sentence. This

suggests that native Korean speakers may initially process idioms word by word instead of recognizing them as single lexical items the way native English speakers are thought to, although they recognize the difference at a later stage. According to the configuration hypothesis (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988), there is a point where readers recognize that a phrase is idiomatic. After that point, the idiom is processed faster. The difference in total time between native Korean speakers and native English speakers implies that the recognition point may vary depending on language background.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The analyses of the native English and native Korean reading measures for idiomatic and literal sentences reveal several findings. First, native Korean speakers in this study processed both idiomatic and literal phrases more slowly than native English speakers. Second, the native Korean speakers processed literal phrases more quickly than idiomatic ones, but only in the late reading measure. Finally, frequency affected reading measures such that highly frequent literal phrases took longer to process than less frequent ones. Like native English speakers, native Korean speakers may store English idioms as a single lexical unit. However, whether the idioms are retrieved as multi-word lexical units or a single lexical unit may differ by language background (L1/L2) and idiom frequency. Likewise, the recognition point of an idiom may vary according to language background and the idiom's frequency.

English language teachers can use these findings in several ways to support student learning in the classroom. An obvious application is to familiarize English language learners with idiomatic language (i.e., idioms and phrasal verbs) in English. This is because idiomatic language can be processed more quickly than literal versions when students are highly familiar with those phrases. Teachers can provide direct idiom instruction and utilize idiomatic language in classroom instruction. Teachers can also translate idioms across languages as a way to increase student familiarity with culturally specific idiomatic language (e.g., contrasting “a piece of cake” in English with “like eating cold porridge” in Korean). Most importantly, teachers can point out idiomatic language in reading texts and natural language to sensitize students to the frequency of idiomatic forms around them. Teachers should also expose

students to literal uses of idiomatic phrases in order to reinforce the dual nature of both literal and figurative meanings; doing so can help English language learners make quick decisions about the potential idiomatic nature of unfamiliar and opaque lexical units.

While eye-tracking is an ideal approach for investigating reading behavior, there are nevertheless notable limitations to the current design. For instance, the idiomatic phrases used in this study were not controlled for syntactic form nor were they controlled for transparency, predictability of final word, or congruence with Korean idioms. Moreover, participants self-reported familiarity with each idiomatic phrase, but their comprehension was not tested in other ways. More robust and controlled measures of language proficiency and idiom knowledge could lead to greater insights into how language proficiency and development figure into idiomatic processing.

A second area for further research is the role of re-reading within idiomatic processing. Both participant groups spent similar amounts of time re-reading previous portions of the text; however, L2 learners spent more time re-reading the figurative language used in the idiomatic phrase. It would be informative to see how cognitive processing changes if readers are unable to re-read the idiom. This could be examined through a moving window study. Would this equalize the language proficiency variable or exacerbate it? If both groups showed longer reading times or reduced comprehension of the idioms, it would suggest that re-reading idiomatic phrases is a necessary component of idiomatic recognition.

Given the significance of formulaic phrases in the English language, the acquisition and processing of idiomatic phrases by English language learners is a topic worthy of further study. Findings from this study show that Korean L2 learners process idiomatic sentences more slowly than literal sentences in terms of later meaning processing. This effect is thought to be moderated by idiomatic knowledge, suggesting that it is familiarity with the meaning of specific idiomatic phrases that contributes to idiomatic processing speed. It is possible that English language learners may initially read idiomatic phrases as individual words but progress to processing idiomatic phrases as single lexical items as their familiarity with idiomatic phrases increases. Future research will continue to illuminate the processes by which learners acquire idiomatic language and the connections between idiomatic knowledge and cognitive processing.

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## APPENDIX

### Idiom and Carrier Sentences

Literal Phrase	Idiomatic Phrase
1. I <u>turned on</u> the light before I sat down at my desk.	The politician's supporters <u>turned on</u> him when they realized he was lying.
2. I found five dollars <u>on the street</u> yesterday.	He has been <u>on the street</u> since he lost his job.
3. I <u>stood by</u> the door so I could be first in line when the store opened.	I <u>stood by</u> my friends when they were in trouble.
4. My shoes <u>fell apart</u> after I used them for three years.	The student <u>fell apart</u> from the constant stress.
5. I got a <u>spot on</u> my shirt.	His guesses are usually <u>spot on</u> .
6. I have a <u>sink in</u> my kitchen but not in my bathroom.	I'm still waiting for the bad news to <u>sink in</u> .
7. I bought a <u>ticket to</u> the new movie.	This interview could be my <u>ticket to</u> success.
8. The man took his coat <u>off the hook</u> and went outside.	My manager let me <u>off the hook</u> for my mistake.
9. We have <u>a long way to go</u> before we arrive at the airport.	The company still has <u>a long way to go</u> before it is out of debt.
10. The woman put the groceries <u>in the bag</u> .	He had the job <u>in the bag</u> after he did well on his interview.
11. The mother <u>pulled the plug</u> in the bath.	The businessman <u>pulled the plug</u> on the deal.
12. Everyone was surprised when the player scored after shooting the ball <u>with his eyes closed</u> .	His history homework was so easy that he could do it <u>with his eyes closed</u> .
13. The runner <u>got back on his feet</u> after he tripped.	After losing his job, he quickly <u>got back on his feet</u> .
14. There was a warning sign <u>on the fence</u> by the construction site.	Congress is still <u>on the fence</u> about the new bill.
15. She couldn't <u>keep her eyes open</u> because of the strong wind.	Annie was careful to <u>keep her eyes open</u> for good sales at the store.
16. After looking at a map, he took <u>a step in the right direction</u> .	Going to college was <u>a step in the right direction</u> for him.

17. I accidentally <u>scratched the surface</u> of the table.	Our research barely <u>scratched the surface</u> of the topic.
18. After dinner, I ate <u>a piece of cake</u> for dessert.	This assignment is <u>a piece of cake</u> .
19. I burned the <u>tip of my tongue</u> on my hot chocolate.	His name is on the <u>tip of my tongue</u> , but I can't remember it.
20. The child threw a ball that bounced off the wall and <u>went out the window</u> .	His hopes for college <u>went out the window</u> when he saw his test results.
21. The water <u>went down the drain</u> .	My efforts <u>went down the drain</u> .
22. If you play outside, you might <u>get your hands dirty</u> .	You need to <u>get your hands dirty</u> to be a successful businessman.
23. The balloon <u>was up in the air</u> .	His promotion <u>was up in the air</u> .
24. After the storm, the water <u>under the bridge</u> near my house was higher than ever.	She yelled at her boyfriend last week, but that's <u>water under the bridge</u> now.
25. I gave him a pencil because <u>he was asking for it</u> .	I know I shouldn't have hit him, but <u>he was asking for it</u> .
26. The cat <u>smelled a rat</u> that was hiding in the kitchen cupboard.	The businessman <u>smelled a rat</u> when he was offered a deal that seemed too good.
27. When people eat at a buffet, they usually <u>have a lot on their plates</u> .	Ever since the new baby was born, they <u>have a lot on their plates</u> .
28. In boxing, it is illegal to <u>hit below the belt</u> .	He <u>hit below the belt</u> when he mentioned John's divorce.
29. The bitter drink <u>left a bad taste in his mouth</u> .	The way the waiter treated him <u>left a bad taste in his mouth</u> .
30. The big piece of meat <u>was hard for him to swallow</u> .	The bad news <u>was hard for him to swallow</u> .



# Students' Perceptions of the Extensive Reading Process in Terms of Translation Usage and Reading While Listening

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Extensive reading is a useful tool in language study. The authors managed an extensive reading program using the XReading.com platform. The program was delivered in two 16-week supervised semesters with an additional unsupervised summer campaign. A survey was administered in Week 4 of the second semester to 89 students who participated in the program. The survey gauged their reliance on the use of translation and grammar analysis, the use of the audio-assisted reading function, and the correlation between the two. It was hypothesized that students who read while listening (RWL) would be less likely to rely on the use of translation and grammar analysis. Analysis suggests that engagement with extensive reading over time decreased the use of grammar and translation strategies. Evidence on the use of the audio function was insufficient to derive conclusions.

*Keywords:* extensive reading (ER), XReading.com, grammar translation method, reading while listening (RWL), self-efficacy

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Benefits of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading (ER), or reading for pleasure, has recently become a popular method of instruction in Japan and other Asian countries because of the many benefits associated with this form of classroom instruction. In ER, students are expected to read a lot of books (graded

readers) that are at or slightly below their level, and this practice leads to increased reading fluency (Stoller, 2015). To experience significant effects on reading fluency and vocabulary acquisition, researchers posited that students need to read more than 200,000 words in a year (Beglar & Hunt, 2014). There are many interpretations of what ER should consist of and, as such, there are many ways in which instructors have implemented ER programs (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 37). Waring and McLean (2015) identified four essential core features of ER: fluent comprehension, high reading speeds, reading a large amount of text, and a focus on the meaning of the texts read.

Meta-analyses conducted on ER have revealed gains in reading rates, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Jeon & Day, 2016; Nakanishi, 2015). Mermelstein (2015) and Park (2016) have shown that undergraduates studying in EFL programs significantly improved their writing skills with just a few short sessions of ER each week. ER can also have a positive effect on critical thinking skills: Indonesian undergraduate students who participated in an ER program showed higher scores on a critical-thinking test than a control group. The study participants also reported that ER helped with their ability to apply critical thinking in problem-solving (Husna, 2019).

Particularly in terms of reading speed and comprehension, ER has been shown to be superior to intensive reading (IR), which is the traditional, still prevalent form of classroom instruction at most Japanese universities. In IR, students read texts that are more difficult, rely on dictionaries for unfamiliar vocabulary, and engage in translation and grammar analysis. Students practicing ER have been shown to have significantly higher reading rates than students who only practiced IR (Huffman, 2014; Suk, 2014). In Japan, IR is also known as *yakudoku* (the grammar–translation method). A study conducted by McLean and Roualt (2017) has shown that Japanese undergraduates who practiced ER made significantly more gains in reading rates than fellow students who learned via the grammar–translation method. The authors of the study concluded that “ER is not merely more effective but also more efficient at increasing reading rate than grammar–translation” (McLean & Roualt, 2017, p. 103).

## The Grammar–Translation Method

Despite the growing number of studies showing the effectiveness of

ER, its implementation has been slow at most Japanese institutions. The preferred method of teaching reading in the Japanese context is the grammar–translation method (Cook, 2012; Tsukamoto & Tsujioka, 2013), and as a result, Japanese students have a long-standing habit of conducting reading in English by engaging in a translation exercise (Sakurai, 2015). The grammar–translation method requires that students use dictionaries and focus on analyzing grammar and translating the texts from L2 into L1 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 159). This is contradictory to ER practice, which “generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer readings (e.g., whole books) for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language” (Carrell & Carson, 1997, pp. 49–50). Due to previous learning environments and to the way in which most teacher training courses in Japan emphasize *yakudoku*, this is the most commonly utilized form of teaching reading in L2 in this country (Tsukamoto & Tsujioka, 2013). Thus, many K–12 Japanese instructors teach reading in L2 by focusing on short and challenging texts, dissecting the texts at the sentence and word level, then translating them (Nation & Waring, 2011).

The focus on the grammar–translation method in K–12 education is thought to have a detrimental effect on the practice of ER. Students who focus on grammar and translation slow down while losing focus on the content of the reading. ER focuses on content and fluency. Decreasing reliance on *yakudoku* when doing ER was shown to have a positive influence on reading amount, speed, and comprehension. A complete avoidance of grammar–translation was suggested as the best approach to achieve overall performance in ER (Sakurai, 2015).

## **The Practice of Reading While Listening**

The practice of reading while listening (RWL) has long been established as helping L2 learners with reading skills (Antle, 2011; Billy, 2010; Tangakarn & Gampper, 2020; Webb & Chang, 2014). In fact, RWL has shown broad efficacy in improving receptive skills over ER alone (Milliner, 2019). While the focus in this paper is on reading skills, it is important to keep in mind that students need to develop both reading and listening skills. As such, knowing that RWL provides some benefit to reading skills is useful, but the fact that the reading skill gains occur simultaneously with listening skill gains makes the findings even

more pedagogically significant. Another key advantage to implementing ER is in reading fluency. By using audio support, teachers can see an increase in reading fluency gains while also seeing improvements in comprehension (Friedland et al., 2017). RWL provides a strong advantage in comprehension (Woodall, 2010). Field (2008, p. 233) argues that while engaged in RWL activities, students are more likely to focus their attention on the written than on the spoken word. Comparing the reading gains of Taiwanese undergraduate students, it was found that students who conducted extensive reading while listening showed marked improvement in reading speeds and a significant effect on reading comprehension compared to students who only engaged in sustained silent reading, and that the effects were more long lived for the RWL group (Chang & Millett, 2015). The intent of ER is to focus on understanding what is being read and reading a lot. By increasing fluency and comprehension, RWL strengthens the key goals of ER.

Not only does RWL provide improved comprehension; it is also preferable to some learners (Chang, 2009). However, Japanese students tend to be less receptive to RWL, and that ease of use needs to be taken into consideration when implementing an RWL program (Gobel & Kano, 2013). Student level, however, does need to be taken into consideration. Lower-level students, while receiving benefits, may need more time to acclimate to RWL (Chang & Millett, 2016). One issue with RWL is that students' reading rates might not match the listening speed, and this would not be beneficial to learners (Chang, 2009; Gobel, 2011). The Taiwanese students in Chang and Millett's (2015) study did not have the benefit of an adjustable speed audio function, but the XReading.com platform that students used in this study contained an audio function with a manually adjustable speed for most of the graded readers. In addition, the students who participated in the Chang and Millett study read only 85,712 words, which falls well short of Beglar and Hunt's (2014) 200,000-word threshold for achieving gains from ER.

## **ER and Self-Efficacy**

Investigating Japanese students' perceptions of ER, Mikami (2006) found that most study participants had very little prior experience with the practice and found it difficult to maintain positive motivation. Students' perceptions and attitudes are a crucial factor that instructors need to consider in order to successfully implement any learning strategy

(Hwang, 2002; Mendler, 2001; Yamashita, 2004). Self-perception, or the evaluation of one's ability to perform a certain task (also known as "self-efficacy") determines the attitude that the individual will adopt towards a task, such as ER, and can have a significant effect on the outcome. In other words, self-perception will affect the effort that the individual will expend on a given task, the willingness to overcome obstacles, and the expectation of achievement (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Individuals who experience success in completing a task improve self-perception, and there is a likelihood that this will lead to setting higher goals in the future for the same or similar tasks (Weiner, 1972, 1979; Weiner et al., 1971). Self-perception has a great influence on reading ability in L1, and it has been hypothesized that it would also have a great impact on reading in L2 (Walker, 2015). There is a strong correlation between self-efficacy and the effort that students will make in reading in L2 (Bandura, 1989; Walker, 2015). Therefore, in evaluating the success of an ER program, it is important to not only gather data on reading speeds, reading comprehension, and number of words read but also to survey the students to understand how they perceive their own progress.

The present study focused on the mitigation of grammar-translation strategies in the ER context. In addition, the accessibility to reading while listening support offered by XReading.com provided a secondary purpose for this study. The aim of the survey was twofold: (a) to gauge students' perceptions about their involvement with English-to-Japanese translation during ER and (b) to determine if the audio function in XReading.com helped students to avoid English-to-Japanese translation.

## **METHOD**

### **Background**

The English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program was designed to be as immersive as possible, and one of its main features was a rigorous ER component. For one year, all students had to read 15,000 words per week (240,000 words per semester) and have scores of at least 50% on reading comprehension quizzes on the XReading.com site to receive a passing score for the semester. XReading.com is a digital library of

graded readers that contains a good variety of texts for all levels and allows instructors to track titles, number of words read, and reading speed. Comprehension quizzes are also available for all books as well as an audio function that gives readers the ability to listen as they read.

## **Participants**

The Japanese undergraduate students who participated in this study were enrolled in a faculty department that was established with the purpose of offering programs in education, management, and tourism and hospitality in the English language. To graduate, all students were expected to complete all their course work in English, and to prepare them for this challenge, an intensive three-semester-long EAP program was created for all incoming freshmen. Following the successful completion of the EAP program, students were required to attend a mandatory study abroad program for six months to a year before being able to pursue specialization within their fields of study in the department.

From this program, 103 students were asked to participate in the survey. For inclusion, students had to (a) have received a passing score for their first semester of study and (b) have taken a modified version of the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading Progress/Placement Test A (EPER/PPT A) three times. Of the students who met the criteria, there were 89 respondents.

## **Materials**

Students engaged in ER through XReading.com. This allowed for the measurement of student progress. This also gave students access to RWL functionality. In order to address the research questions, a survey instrument was used. The survey instrument was adapted from Nobuko Sakurai's (2015) study and was made available to the participants in both English and Japanese.

## **Survey Questions**

1. Compared to April, I use English–Japanese translation less often when I read.
2. I translate English sentences into Japanese word order less often

- now in ER.
3. I translate English words less often now during ER.
  4. I translate frequently used English words less often now during ER.
  5. I translate English words I know well into Japanese less often now during ER.
  6. I vocalize English words and sentences less often now during ER.
  7. I stop reading less often now during ER when I encounter English words I have never seen before.
  8. I stop reading less often now during ER when I encounter English words I have seen but cannot recall meaning.
  9. I think about English grammar less often now during ER.
  10. I frequently use the audio function when I do XReading.
  11. When I use the audio function, I am less likely to translate English sentences into Japanese.

### **Likert Scale Response Options**

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Somewhat agree
- 5 = Agree
- 6 = Strongly agree

### **Procedure**

Students took part in the academic reading program as a part of their regular English study program. In Week 4 of the second semester, students were asked to complete the survey. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics followed by calculating Pearson correlations.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for Questions 1 through 5 from the survey, which dealt mainly with the frequency and manner of English-to-Japanese translation that the students were engaging in while doing ER. The means for overall translation (Question 1) and for

word-level translation (Question 3) were around 4.3, indicating that the most common answers given by the students were *agree* or *somewhat agree*. This seems to indicate that most students were less likely to engage in overall translation and word-level translation compared to when they were first introduced to the practice of ER. The means for sentence-level translation (Question 2), translation of frequently used English words (Question 4), and translation of familiar vocabulary (Question 5) were higher than 4.6, which seems to suggest that most students chose to answer *agreed* to these questions. The standard deviation values for these questions are within one point, which means that there is not much deviation and most of the answers are close to the mean.

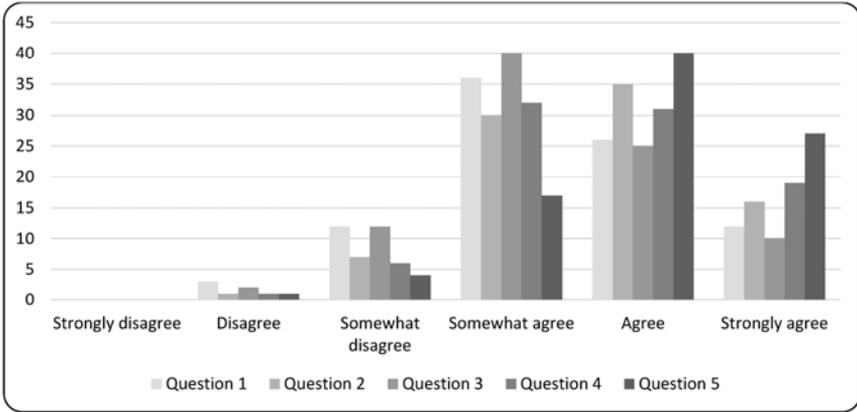
**TABLE 1. Translation (Questions 1-5)**

	<b>1. Compared to April, Japanese translation appears less often.</b>	<b>2. I translate English sentences into Japanese word order less often now in ER.</b>	<b>3. I translate English words less often now during ER.</b>	<b>4. I translate frequently used English words less often now during ER.</b>	<b>5. I translate English words I know well into Japanese less often now during ER.</b>
Mean	4.36	4.65	4.33	4.69	4.99
Median	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
Mode	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00
SD	0.99	0.91	0.93	0.92	0.89
Kurtosis	-0.26	-0.21	-0.14	-0.36	0.59
Skewness	-0.14	-0.28	0.00	-0.21	-0.78

Regarding kurtosis, values for all questions fall within the -2 to +2 range, considered acceptable for a normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2010, p. 77). Similarly, the skewness values for Questions 1 through 5 also show that the data is normal (Bryne, 2010, p. 39).

Figure 1 exhibits the data distribution for Questions 1 through 5. Regarding the level of overall translation (Question 1), most of the answers are clustered in the middle portion of the graph, indicating that a majority of students answered *agree* or *somewhat agree* that overall translation has decreased since the beginning of the academic year.

FIGURE 1. Translation (Questions 1–5)



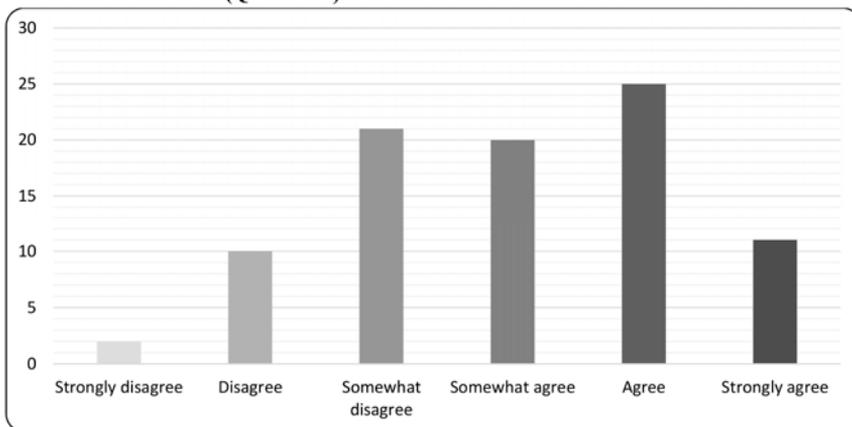
For all questions, the distribution seems to be skewing to the right, suggesting that as students progressed with their ER, they were less likely to engage in any type of translation. As students become exposed to vocabulary through reading, the more likely they are to stop automatically translating, as ER is a good tool for increasing familiarity with vocabulary through actual usage.

Students were being instructed in an environment in which English was the predominant language of instruction, and the way the ER program was setup, the grammar–translation method was not used. Despite this, in the first weeks, most students were still viewing reading as an activity that would help them to learn higher-level academic vocabulary for the TOEIC test (the method of assessment and scholarship for study abroad assignment criteria used by the university). XReading.com was very useful in trying to limit the level of graded readers that were made available to students, thus helping students to stick to the ER principle of reading many easy books. However, in the second semester, students were allowed access to a wider range of levels of graded readers. This was helpful to students in the higher-level homerooms, who were probably limited in the first semester, but it also lead to students trying to read books that were far above their level in order to use the texts as a source for learning new vocabulary. It is naïve to assume that after being taught with the *yakudoku* method for most of their primary and secondary education, students would just naturally move on to practicing ER. Despite this, their responses to Questions 1–5

of the survey seem to suggest a movement away from translation as they progressed with their ER practice.

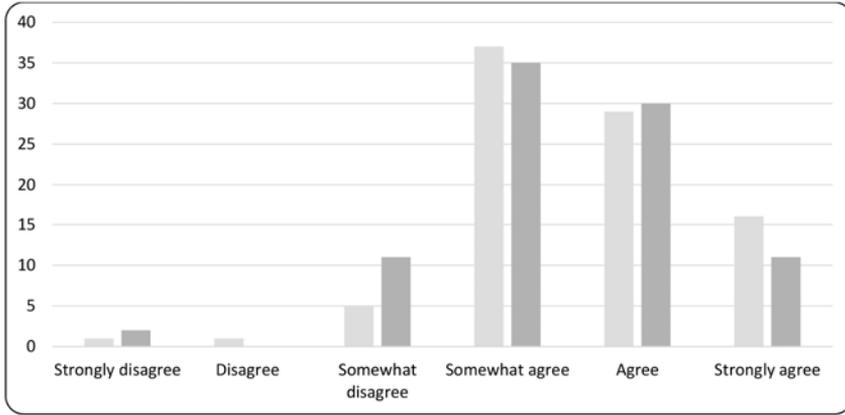
Regarding vocalization, or the practice of reading out loud, is shown in Figure 2. While the distribution suggests a slight skew towards a reduction in vocalization, there are two peaks, suggesting several possible interpretations. One interpretation is that some students found vocalization to be a useful practice in their reading, and these students would likely disagree, explaining the first peak centered at *somewhat disagree*. Another possibility is that another subset of students might perceive vocalization as an obstacle and not something that is helpful, which could explain the second peak in the data centered at *agree*. This phenomenon could be due to the fact that the survey respondents were a mix of levels with TOEIC scores ranging from 150 to 750, which means that it is not a uniform sample of perception on this particular criterion.

**FIGURE 2. Vocalization (Question 6)**



Questions 7 and 8 gauge whether the students are pausing less during reading or trying to continue reading rather than stopping to look up unknown vocabulary or stopping to verify grammar. For both categories, the distribution is skewed strongly towards the right; in other words, most students selected *somewhat agree*, *agree*, or *strongly agree*. The data seems somewhat centralized compared to translation, so there seems to be a weaker effect than translation on disfluency avoidance.

**FIGURE 3. Avoiding Excessive Pauses (Questions 7–8)**

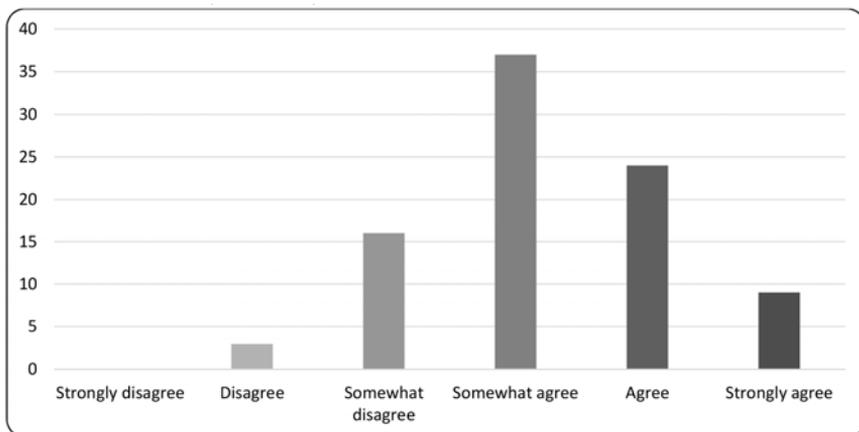


The effects of focusing on grammar (Question 9) are more similar to the effects of translation (Questions 1–5), with the majority of the answers clustering around the “agree” options. There seems to be a skew towards a reduction in grammar focus as students are progressing with ER, although the effect seems to be weaker than for the reduction in translation. The overall reduction in focus on grammar as students are reading seems to indicate that they are moving away from reading to practice language and moving towards a focus on ER.

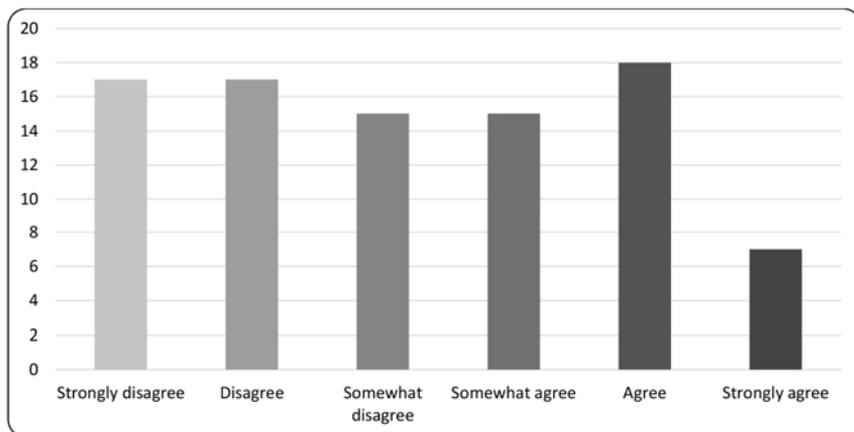
The audio function use (Question 10) showcased in Figure 5, shows a very wide range distribution. This means that some students didn’t use the audio function at all, while other students used this feature more, with the distribution somewhat skewed towards not using it. The reason for this is that there was a lack of consistent messaging: Although the EAP program was supposed to be coordinated, teachers were given a free hand at how they chose to run their classes, and some teachers did not inform the students properly about the full functions available to them on the XReading.com site. In addition, some students may have perceived the use of the audio function as cheating. In other words, it is possible they might have felt that listening is not really reading, and therefore that they were not really doing the assignment correctly. Overall, there seems to be disagreement on the use of the audio function in this group of students, but it is most likely an issue of how the XReading site was introduced to students. For example, post-survey, some students in the lower-level homerooms were asked why they did

not use the audio function, and the most cited reason was that they felt the audio was too fast for them to keep up. When asked the same question, some students in the higher-level homerooms answered that the audio function was slowing them down. Since the speed of the audio on XReading.com is adjustable manually, this was clearly due to a lack of proper communication on how the function can be used.

**FIGURE 4. Grammar (Question 9)**



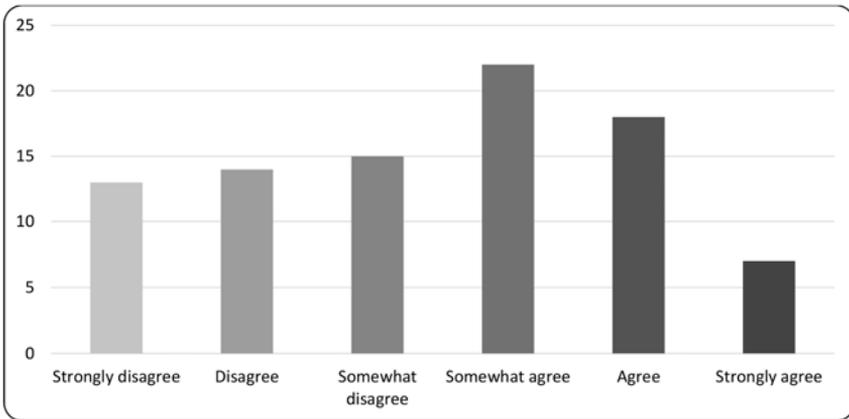
**FIGURE 5. Audio Function Use**



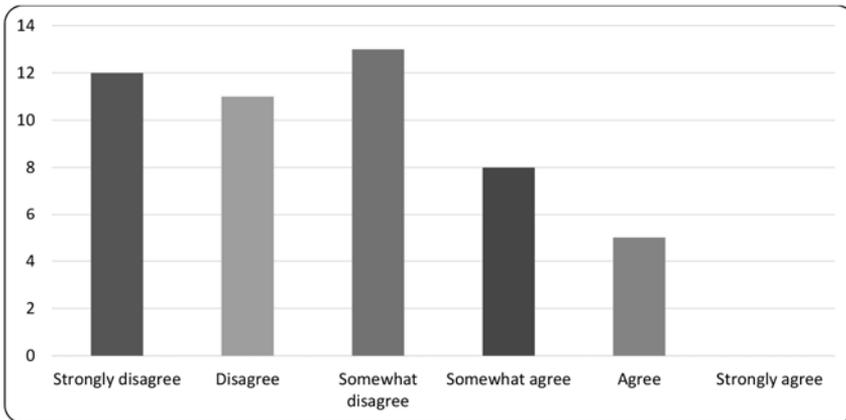
Regarding the audio function effect on translation (Question 11), the distribution is a lot less random (see Figure 6), with a slight skew

towards those who felt that the audio function helped them decrease use of translation. The lack of clumping or the lack of skewness in the data may be related to inconsistency in use of the audio function, and this question might have to be readdressed in future research. However, there is a Pearson correlation between Questions 10 and 11 (0.697), which means that the students who used the audio function more were more likely to say they decreased their use of translation more. This can be clearly seen by comparing the responses of students who did not use the audio function (i.e., answering *strongly disagree* to *somewhat disagree* on Question 10; see Figure 7), with those who did use the audio function (see Figure 8). It is possible that the students who did not use the audio function could not really answer this survey question, as they could not really experience how the audio function affected their use of translation. On the other hand, the students who used the audio function overwhelmingly skewed towards perceiving benefits.

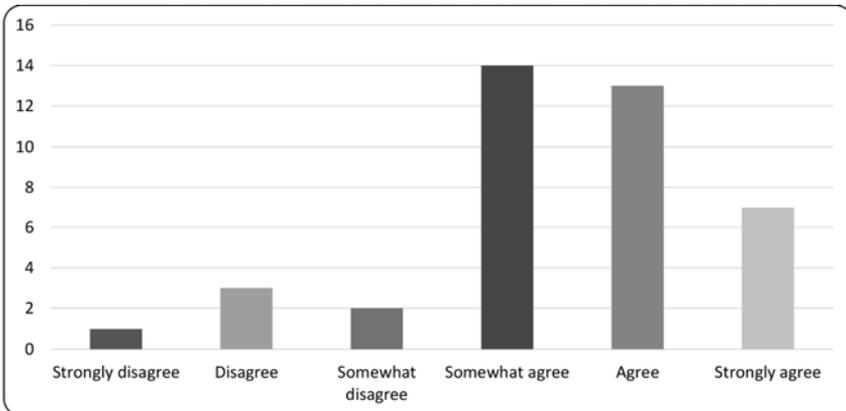
**FIGURE 6. Audio Function Effect on Translation**



**FIGURE 7. Audio Function Use Effect on Translations – Did Not Use Audio Function**



**FIGURE 8. Audio Function Effect on Translation – Used Audio Function**



## CONCLUSIONS

Overall, after participating in this ER program for 20 weeks and in the summer reading campaign, most students reported that they experienced an overall reduction in the rate of English-to-Japanese translation and in their focus on grammar. More research is needed to address the questions on vocalization and the use of the audio function

because there needs to be better coordination among teachers so that students can understand the value and the usage of these functions. While the students who used the audio function felt that it was beneficial, it is important to understand why the students chose not to use the function. To further enhance students' self-efficacy in ER, it is important for instructors to guide and focus their efforts to avoid *yakudoku*. This notion might be surprising to Japanese students who have been trained to read in English with the grammar–translation method for most of their academic life. However, for students to attain benefits from ER, there is a need to scaffold the new approach to them. In particular, reading fluency is difficult to develop using any other methodology, yet it is key to developing in the language and to be productive in a content and language integrated (CLIL) or English as a medium of instruction (EMI) classroom. This is important as many universities are moving language learning towards CLIL or EMI models (Fujimoto-Adamson & Adamson, 2018).

Data on the reading speeds and number of words read also needs to be collected and analyzed to determine if the students' perceptions of their progress with ER correlates with their scores and actual progress as tracked by the XReading.com site. Furthermore, the key finding is that students developed strategies for the negotiation of meaning that were better suited to ER through practice. Moving forward, ER can be seen as a tool for not only the development of reading fluency and vocabulary but also as a tool to improve metacognitive strategy repertoire and usage.

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# Applying Ambitious Instruction in EMI University Classes

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This paper reports on the implementation of ambitious instruction in two university English-medium instruction (EMI) classes. Instructor observations suggested the seven principles of ambitious instruction were achieved in Korean university EMI classes ( $N = 40$ ). Ambitious instruction connected learning to the real world, engaged learners in investigative practices, and promoted deeper reflective thinking. Students viewed their peers as resources for learning and were given opportunities to present coursework publically. The classes also introduced and prompted use of multimedia tools to encourage learning and offered ample time for students to collectively reflect and comment on lecture content. Student comments in semi-structured interviews supported the observations. The students claimed ambitious instruction better anchored learning to the real world and gave them opportunities to comment on and present their ideas. Overall, ambitious instruction appeared to inspire and nurture learner autonomy and develop deeper higher-order thinking. In addition, students viewed themselves and others as learning resources.

*Keywords:* ambitious instruction, EMI, student engagement, multimedia, learner autonomy

## INTRODUCTION

Materials and instructional pedagogy by instructors are only effective if they are designed with the learner in mind. The English-medium instruction (EMI) education provided at non-L1 (English) universities cannot afford to ignore changes in a global society. For instance, in the case of Korea, the number of CEO graduates from Seoul National

University, Korea University, and Yonsei University (the so-called “SKY” elite universities) has dropped, and job performance is now prized over one’s educational background (Nam, 2019). English language ability has become necessary to have a successful career in nearly any professional field and to make professional connections with the world. Like other non-English-speaking nations, Korean students envision their personal futures in the larger world. A recent study (Geddes, 2016) on Korean students’ attitudes and motivation towards studying English reported that participants would continue learning English, even if it were not a compulsory subject at university, and that they were learning English to get a better job. In other words, the younger generation understands the need for English for their future in today’s globalized world.

Traditionally, students at university became specialists in a certain field. However, with the 4th Industrial Revolution insisting that global persons have both specialty knowledge and knowledge outside their field, there is a need to evolve traditional teaching–learning environments so that students develop indispensable skills. These include (a) complex problem-solving (b) creativity, (c) emotional intelligence, (d) analytical (critical) thinking, (e) active learning with a growth mind-set, (f) judgment and decision-making, (g) interpersonal communication skills, (h) leadership skills, (i) diversity and cultural intelligence, (j) technology skills, and (k) embracing change (Marr, 2019).

With regard to Korea, larger numbers of students have been overseas and exposed to different teaching–learning styles (Ock, 2016), increasing numbers of expats return yearly (International Migration Statistics in 2018, 2019), there is an increasing number of multicultural children (Multicultural Family Support Project, 2020), and annually there is a progressive rise in international students (Nam, 2018). Students taking EMI courses, then, especially those with overseas learning experiences, are sophisticated consumers of pedagogical approaches. Even EMI students who have never studied outside the nation are learning, for instance, at cram schools, from international instructors of various levels of experience, educational backgrounds, and skills. Moreover, international students bring pedagogical approaches from their homelands as well as their own expectations of the classroom, which might be quite different from those of domestic students. EMI instructors could benefit from having a wide repertoire of skills so that they not only teach content more effectively but also improve students’ 21st century

competencies, which include the following:

- Learning and Innovation Skills: Creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration
- Information, Media, and Technology Skills: Information literacy, media literacy, ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) literacy
- Life and Career Skills: Flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility

(Battelle for Kids, 2019)

Research in Korea has looked at EMI from outside the classroom in terms of, for instance, satisfaction, pedagogy, and students' perspectives (Chuang, 2015). However, there is a need to examine actual innovative pedagogy inside EMI classes that goes beyond conventional frameworks, leads to improved overall EMI teaching and learning performance, and successfully integrates international and domestic student enrollees.

The university EMI course Exploration of Korean Culture, had the goal of educating students to become people with global competence in course subject-matter and with English language beyond advanced English skills, as those are achieved through English language learning and competency testing. Global competence for this course included the ability to critically understand and analyze Korean culture through activities that looked at the roots of culture such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs. short-term orientation, which are ideas taken from dimensions of national cultures presented in Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). It also involved using the language to explore such things as content knowledge and background history, for language is inherently infused with values, and sentences reflect aspects of a people's way of life, including culture, social and political systems, and even such things as fashion. Also, by exploring course content through the medium of English, students can engage in critical comparison of cultures.

Dewey (1907), widely considered the initiator of the movement towards progressive education, advocated for change in education to meet the changing needs of society during his era, but his ideas are still relevant in today's classrooms, where students communicate and

disseminate information by “cell phones, instant messaging, texting, chat rooms and wikis” and become “bored, restless, and discontent in our four-walled classrooms” (Slaughter, 2009, p. 17). Dewey’s idea is even more important today. Global EMI classrooms have expanded with native- and non-native-speaker instructors using English to teach their academic subject-matter, which is believed to attract international students and to reduce the thinking among domestic students that they must go overseas to develop language competency and experience a “Western” learning environment. Also, in the case of Korea, for six years from 2014 to 2019, Korea ranked first as the most innovative technological power in the world on the Bloomberg Global Innovation Index (Jamrisko & Lu, 2020). Together, these situations suggested that EMI classes could benefit from ambitious instruction, a practice encouraged at schooling levels prior to tertiary education.

Ambitious instruction is pedagogy that goes beyond plain presentation of fact and skills to having instructors and students together explore academic content, cooperate intellectually, and develop new abilities (Peurach, 2017). It is plausible that EMI class content knowledge could be positively influenced if the classroom dynamics were more ambitious, which this teaching-as-research study explored. Also, an EMI class should address the changing demographics of students in the modern EMI university classroom with pedagogy that maximizes interactions among domestic and international students in order to experience authentic L2 practice without having to study or live abroad in an English-speaking country and offers higher levels of group academic and social interactions. For a long time, there has been a demand for students to develop a higher level of understanding and problem-solving abilities, and this requires ambitious learning goals (Wieman, 2019). The benefit of ambitious instruction for EMI classes is that it could move the learning environment from teacher-fronted communication of content to authentic comprehension of the content as a result of collaborative engagement in real-world, practical, and challenging activities. Students could create new specialty knowledge and competencies in themselves and others.

This paper looks at implementing ambitious instruction in a university EMI course that has students collaboratively use and critically discuss lecture information, engage in serious collaborative and integrated communication across cultures, and participate in academic field trips, all of which challenge students to assume more autonomy

towards achieving the course learning objectives and 21st century competencies such as higher-order discussion skills. The desired learning outcomes in this course were adapted from the seven principles of ambitious instruction teaching listed in Stroupe et al. (2016): (a) Anchor content learning to the real world, (b) allow students to exercise investigative practices to support, develop, or validate ideas, (c) use instructor discourse that promotes deep thinking, (d) have students act as learning resources while engaging in collaborative work and discussion, (e) provide opportunities for students to present their work and thoughts publicly, (f) introduce tools that support and encourage active learning, and (g) give students occasions to reflect and comment on content and their learning.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Ambitious Instruction for the EMI Class**

In ambitious teaching – practices that achieve the seven principles mentioned above – teachers respond to students’ problem-solving efforts while maintaining student attention to correct procedures, reasoning, and production. In addition, class activities must consider teacher and student interactions, as well as content (Kazemi, Franke, & Lampert, 2009). Reviewing previous studies on ambitious instruction among in- and pre-service teachers, Stroupe et al. (2016) wrote that instructors who have interaction(s) with students form a classroom community that engages in disciplinary work in which teachers modify and create pedagogical tools and routines that encourage students to acquire deeper understanding.

In tertiary L1 education, Horn and Campbell (2015) addressed the lack of learning by doing (i.e., practical learning, with students in education courses by introducing pedagogy that incorporated ambitious forms of instruction). They found that ambitious instruction promoted development of complex pedagogical judgment among students in the class. Research on the instructional practice of eliciting student ideas as a basis of instruction by Grinath and Southerland (2018) found that after examining ambitious instruction in a university biology course, most discourse patterns were factual contributions and observations. That is,

instructors controlled the conversations and hesitated in allowing students to struggle with concepts, focusing more on the contributions of ideas from students and the idea of having fun. The researchers in the study recommended ambitious instruction for university science courses, as well as any ambitious subject instruction, and to pay more attention to explanatory rigor in student discourse so that it not only draws out ideas but also encourages progress on those ideas.

Ambitious instruction in this EMI course had students meet high but achievable content expectations through high levels of socio-cognitive and cross-cultural communication activities such as international and domestic student exchanges of information, opinions, and ideas as well as self-reflection journals, involvement in in- and out-of-class project-based learning, and interdisciplinary research all performed through the medium of English. This does not imply the absence of failure, which itself is also important in learning. The most important aspect is that the instructor has high expectations of their students.

### **Integrate the Class Body for Ambitious Instruction**

Ambitious instruction requires students to collectively collaborate in authentic practical activities inside and outside of the classroom in order to create new knowledge and capabilities, which improves content understanding. Like other non-L1 nations implementing EMI classes, there has been rapid growth in international student enrollment at Korean universities. A 700 percent increase in the international population in Korea was reported between 2003 and 2012 (Kim et al., 2018), and the Study in Korea project by the Korean government aims at inviting 200,000 international students by 2023 (“Study in Korea” Support System, 2019). Reporting for *The Korea Times*, Choi (2016) pointed out that universities have been “paying little attention to integrating overseas students.” Also, Palmer and Cho (2011) stated that in their study, one Korean administrator reported that their university was working towards a teaching and learning environment that promoted the idea among Korean students that they did not need to go abroad to be globalized. A study investigating international student satisfaction at Korean universities by Alemu and Cordier (2017) confirmed the speculation that a perceived larger difference with the culture leads to more difficulties in adapting, which reduces satisfaction for international students. Jon (2012) also found the international students’ home country and language

created different power statuses among Korean students and between Korean nationals and international students at the university. The study concluded that power imbalances could be overcome with domestic and international student cultural and personal exchanges. Byun et al. (2010) also concluded that because students in EMI classes differ in terms of nationality, education, expectations, and cultural backgrounds, for EMI classes to be successful, instructors must be aware that a diverse group of students in a class can lead to intercultural communication issues. As a result, higher education institutions must transform to fully include international students.

### **Cooperative Learning for Ambitious Instruction**

Almost 30 years ago, Johnson et al. (1991) defined five key benefits to cooperative learning or “instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (p. 1). They are (a) positive interdependence, (b) face-to-face interaction, (c) individual and group accountability, (d) interpersonal skills, and (e) group processing that leads to success in learning for the individual student as well as the peers in the small group. From examining the cooperative learning structures of a university instructor, Jones and Jones (2008) found that the university students in the class learned about and actively participated in cooperative learning and multicultural education, and recommended its use in other university classrooms due to the students’ affective benefits and cognitive gains. However, typically as of yet, university courses, including EMI courses, as mentioned by Johnson et al. (1998), pay more attention “to developing Lone Rangers than to creating learning communities within which the achievement of all students is enhanced” (p. 35).

### **Excursions for Ambitious Instruction**

The purposes of an excursion includes reinforcing EMI classroom learning, providing students with opportunities to experience or experiment with learning course objectives outside the classroom, and allowing students to engage with each other and the teacher socially. Colonial Williamsburg’s field trip model, as outlined in Stoddard (2009), provides a basis for ensuring a meaningful and quality experience for

EMI class students. The model stipulates the need for (a) clear objectives, (b) links to the curriculum, (c) student, instructor, and field expert interaction, (d) higher-order thinking, (e) a field trip site to offer materials for the instructor, (f) media platforms that enhance learning, (g) students to prep for and review after the trip for sound learning, and (h) instructor validation of the site and field expert(s) to strengthen learning. One study (Demirkaya & Atayeter, 2011) on the field experiences of university students (second- to fourth-year) and instructors in a geography department in Turkey found that both the students and instructors' expectations were exceeded. The instructors in their study said the students experienced meaningful learning and showed positive attitudes from the organized and project-based outings. The students in the study also expressed positive views but also stated that the outings would have been more successful if they had had more information regarding the trip prior to going.

### **Teaching Practice Aims**

While there is growing interest and practice of ambitious instruction at education levels besides tertiary, there are few studies on ambitious instruction at L1 universities, and there has yet to be an examination of how to implement ambitious instruction in university EMI courses. This paper presents an exploratory account of the instructor's use of ambitious instruction in two courses offered in the Department of English Culture and Language at a university in Korea based on instructor observation and student comments. The study's objectives in implementing ambitious instruction are (a) Were the aforementioned seven desired learning outcomes of ambitious instruction listed in Stroupe et al. (2016) observed? and (b) What were the students' general perceptions of the teaching-learning approach?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

Students who enrolled in the two offerings of the Exploration of Korean Culture course were from a variety of majors. These majors were

categorized into three distinct groupings: Liberal Arts (e.g., Philosophy and English Culture,  $n = 21$ , 52.5%), Non-Liberal Arts (e.g., Physics and Economics,  $n = 7$ , 17.5%), and Interdisciplinary Studies (e.g., Chemistry–English Culture and English Culture–Accountancy,  $n = 12$ , 30%). Except for one Australian international student, all were non-native speakers of English (Korean,  $n = 27$ , 67.5%; Mainland Chinese,  $n = 8$ , 20%; Taiwanese,  $n = 2$ , 5%; Mongolian,  $n = 1$ , 2.5%; Japanese,  $n = 1$ , 2.5%; Australian,  $n = 1$ , 2.5%). There were 9 (22.5%) first-year students, 5 (12.5%) second-year students, 15 (37.5%) third-year students, and 11 (27.5%) fourth-year students.

To investigate student perceptions of the entire course approach and procedures, after submitting the final graded report, an email correspondence letter was sent to all students asking if they would voluntarily consent to participate in an interview to share their views and thoughts on the instructors' approach used in the EMI course. Five domestic nationals agreed to the request for a short 10–15 minute interview. A hired research assistant, a graduate of English culture and language previously trained in thematic analysis, interviewed the participants, who prior to being asked questions gave informed consent to the publication of their comments in a research paper. The questions were aimed at assessing the use of ambitious instruction. The research assistant met with participants at a place and time stipulated by the participants (e.g., at a campus café or an unused classroom). The medium of the interviews was English, but to reduce possible anxiety, participants were free to respond in the L1 (Korean). Thematic analysis by the research assistant was performed on the semi-structured interview comments from the students. Thematic analysis does have its disadvantages (Nowell et al., 2017), but a concise and thorough analysis was done using the six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

## **Ambitious Instruction Procedures**

### **Lecture Procedures**

Ambitious instruction gives students occasions to reflect and comment on content and their learning. Also, for an EMI class to succeed, there is a need for careful implementation and preparation, so the instructor accessed the individual academic needs of the students and provided whole-class and individual feedback as well as attempted to

guarantee students ample opportunities to improve their English proficiency (Byun et al., 2010). Like other EMI classes, the focus was on content, not language. However, unlike a majority of EMI classes, the class was largely student-centered for which the expectation was high levels of participation and learning autonomy. Students in the class were exposed to unique aspects of culture in Korea through lecture material, which used elements such as slideshows, news broadcasts, folktales, language, music, film, and dramas as well as some of the instructor's personal experiences. After 25 years in Korea, and being married to a Korean national, the instructor was well suited to share cross-cultural experiences. Students were given reflective time to discuss, debate, and share opinions in small groups, which encouraged active dialogue between domestic and international students. Students also made use of electronic devices to support their ideas with evidence found online.

All course materials were uploaded onto the classes' online lecture rooms beforehand for preview and preparation, if the students so desired. During discussions and debates, the instructor acted as a facilitator who avoided direct intervention in group talks but moved around the classroom from group to group offering additional content explanation and responding to group questions. Also, at the end of each class, students were asked to record in a file aspects from the lesson that they felt were essential to their own personal learning, from group discussions as well as from their personal thoughts. The file (hardcopy or softcopy) was collected for assessment twice during the semester.

### **Topic-Based Slideshow Presentations**

Ambitious instruction requires opportunities for students to present their work and thoughts publicly and to anchor content learning to the real world. During the semester, each student was required to give a 10–15 minute presentation on one cultural aspect that they felt most passionate about, interested in, or wished to share thoughts on with other students (e.g., groupism in organizations, value of age and power hierarchies). This presentation was also their midterm assessment. Basic material was provided to the students, but they were required to use other on- and offline sources. After researching their topic and preparing their presentation, one week prior to presenting, the presenters made an appointment with the instructor to walk through the researched material, discuss content and presentation materials, and contemplate responses to possible questions that could possibly arise during the Q&A session.

After each Q&A session, the students would gather in small groups to reflect on what they had just heard and learnt. To facilitate these talks, the instructor requested each presenter to upload their finalized slideshows, videos, and other source links onto the online lecture room prior to their presentation day. As with the lecture reflection comments, at the end of each presentation, the students were instructed to record aspects of their group discussions and personal thoughts in a file, separate from the lecture reflection file, and it, too, was collected twice a semester as a means of assessing content knowledge and understanding.

### **Project-Based Field Trips**

Ambitious instruction requires students to act as learning resources while engaging in collaborative work and discussion, and this could be done through academic field trips. Field trips are not without expected and recognized weaknesses:

1. Too often, for too many students, the trip becomes a texting opportunity, or a socializing event.
2. In open spaces and without close supervision, many students may simply not have the discipline or interest to pay attention to what they're seeing.
3. Moving through rooms and/or open spaces, students can get detached from the group. Suddenly everyone's attention is turned to finding the missing student(s) instead of being absorbed in the learning opportunity at hand.

Berer (2016)

To ensure quality content learning as well as pleasure for all students, the instructor placed students into small mixed-nationality groupings. Groupings were expected to optimize cross-cultural exchanges of ideas, opinions, discussions, and cultural surprises. An instructor cannot be aware of all issues, questions, concerns, and expectations that students may have of each other, so the groupings gave them the opportunity to interact with each other as peers and tutors, which could maximize student interaction and information. Because students were placed in groups by the instructor, there was a good mix of international and domestic students in each grouping. Also, since the instructor conducted an indirect "needs analysis" at the onset of the course by asking each student to submit a "student profile," the instructor was fully

aware of each domestic student's hometown and was able to make groupings with that in mind as well.

While the instructor would later join the trips and adjust them in-process, students were fully responsible for all aspects of the trip from budgeting to transportation to meals to first-hand experience reservations. Students worked together on data collection and analysis using various media to thoroughly research and develop their own cultural excursions. Students were directed to search the internet for activities and events that would best supplement their individual learning. In groups, students created excursions (see Table 1) that took anywhere from 5 to 9 hours to complete, but the instructor would stay with them the entire excursion time. Students were encouraged to, and did, make use of both cloud and SNS application tools to share collected information and information of interest during the planning stage. Students who wished to confirm the relevance and scope of the itinerary theme were assisted by the instructor. Directions from one place or activity to the next were also accounted for. Among the planned itineraries were visits to, for instance, exhibitions, *hanok* (Korean traditional houses) villages, traditional markets as well as Hallyu (Korean Wave) places, museums, temples, and palaces. Students also took the opportunity to go to traditional tea houses, eat unique Korean foods like *bundaegi* (silkworm pupa) and *chueo-tang* (mudfish soup), wear *hanbok* (traditional dress attire) – many nationals had never done this, either – and join paid guided tours of places like Gyeonghoeru Pavilion, the Blue House, Cheongwadae Sarangchae, and so forth.

**TABLE 1. Sample Excursion Itinerary: Student Creation**

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Aim:	To give students of different nationalities an opportunity to experience Korean traditional palaces while wearing <i>hanbok</i> so that they can experience Korean traditional culture more directly.
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09:00	Meet at Anguk Station, rent <i>hanbok</i> (45,000 won).
10:15	Participate in the free docent tour of the palace at Changdeok-gung Palace.
11:30	Join the special area tour of Changdeok-gung Palace (24,000 won).
12:00	Eat a Korean dish unfamiliar to all for lunch.
13:00	Move to Ssamji-gil after lunch to see modern day artists' work, and walk along Insa-dong street to enjoy watching people and examining the various traditional items on display, such as Korean masks.
17:00	Have a Korean meal for dinner.
18:00	Call it a day.

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Transportation expenses: 20,000 won; Meal costs: 62,000 won.

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Ambitious instruction also introduces tools that support and encourage active learning. Students were directed to also collect information brochures, pamphlets, recordings, photos, videos, and other resources throughout their excursions. Documentation and information included hardcopy items as well as virtually collected information on smartphones and cameras. After the excursion, students were required to create a short video recap using a video application of their choice to introduce their on-location learning for the rest of the class to view and discuss.

### **Individual Investigative Projects**

Ambitious instruction allows students to exercise investigative practices to support, develop, or validate ideas. The final assessment work for the course was submission of a final report about a social issue or a cultural aspect that the class had not fully addressed to the level the student wished to know or that the student felt they could better elaborate on (e.g., global corporations could benefit from learning about Korean corporations to successfully engage in cross-border activities: writing about the cultural characteristics of Korean corporations; also, reputation and perception are important to Koreans, so respect and social harmony must be shown concurrently: writing about how Koreans give subtle hints or clues about the true nature of a situation without stating it directly). Research prompts were provided to students one week prior to selection and two weeks prior to submission date. The students were asked to read through the prompts and prepare at least four that they would like to do investigative research on for the following week. No two students were permitted to select the same topic. Topic selection was done by a lottery draw. Students were free, at the end, to switch their choice to any one of the remaining items, or after discussion with the instructor, “tweak” the prompt to better match their desired learning interest. The students were expected to write showing deep, solid knowledge, supported by evidence, of the key features outlined in the prompt. Reports were evaluated according to the quality of subject matter knowledge (including a range of sources), unbiased clear arguments, personal insight, and elaboration (85%), as well as cohesiveness, mechanics, and citation (15%).

## OUTCOMES

Ambitious instruction has not yet been examined at universities offering EMI classes. Results based on instructor observations and students' perceptions of ambitious instruction were used to investigate the aforementioned seven desired learning outcomes of ambitious instruction and to ascertain students' views of the approach.

### **Observed EMI Class Integration, and New Knowledge and Capabilities**

Lecture and peer presentation content learning and understanding was assessed through the lectures and presentation reflection journals. Rubric performance assessment criteria included but were not limited to the following: (a) amount of facts and information, (b) grasp of subject knowledge, (c) cultural significance of subject-matter, (d) inferences and connections to the real world, (e) vocabulary complexity when discussing cultural issues, (f) acknowledgement of previous stereotypes or simplistic understanding, (g) demonstration of understanding others' points of views and expectations, (h) self-assessment of performance, and (i) suggestions for learning success. Each of the entries was found to build upon content from previous entries rather than be disconnected.

During walkthroughs with students on their researched material for the topic-based slideshow presentation and for the individual investigative projects, the students reflected on and discussed their understanding of the presentation or report topic. The instructor also reminded students during their 1-to-1 meetings of the high expectations regarding the work and personally meaningful learning of the material.

The frequent small group discussions and debate gave international and domestic students in the class opportunities to communicate and mingle, thereby encouraging active cooperation in the class rather than solitary or competitive learning.

The course was carried out in the medium of English, but that did not mean "English only." To avoid the suppression of discussion ideas and comments, students who had difficulty expressing themselves initially in English were encouraged to speak in their mother tongue and other group members, the instructor, or an online translator application such as Papago or Google Translate helped the individual articulate their

utterances in English. All of the students were observed trying their utmost or using available technology tools to translate or express peers' utterances into the language medium of the class, English. It was noticed that they did this without fear of flaws in accuracy or doubts about fluency to ensure their message was received, which thereby cultivates both life and career skills.

## **Observed Learning and Enjoyment from Excursions**

For the project-based slideshow presentation, international students often took the opportunity to compare an aspect of Korean culture with their home culture, which led to captivated listeners and exciting discussions among groups. On these occasions, they shared their personal understanding of Korean culture. Korean nationals, on the other hand, frequently used the presentation as a chance to dive deep into the history of Korea and share their personal experiences and thoughts. With their peers' material before them, the students were seen reviewing and discussing the presentations more easily than with notes alone.

The small-group (3–5 members) excursions were carried out over a six-week period, with the instructor being an active member of each trip. The students seemed to enjoy their time on the excursions, as they actively discussed and engaged in talk in English throughout the day without strict invention on content or error correction of the English language output. Though a tentative route was established during the planning stage prior to the excursion, the students made use of smartphone applications such as Google Maps and Naver Maps to help with directions on route. Because the excursions were not graded, nor did they count towards the students' final grade, the students did not appear to feel any pressure to compete with other class peers. Instead, it was observed that the students worked even more diligently and actively to ensure learning outside the classroom. Additionally, creating the short video recap was found to be a new experience for most students. They reported to the instructor that they had never created a short video or used video editing software or applications. Therefore, the instructor established extra office hours to help students seeking assistance with the process on one application familiar to the instructor.

## **Observed Real-World Communicative Language**

Real-world communicative language was assessed on language in actual use to discuss a subject or interact at a higher level in discussion of a topic. Because the students actively interacted with peers who spoke various languages and came from a variety of cultural backgrounds, they became both “helpers,” which itself could be empowering and satisfying, and the “ones being helped,” which seemed to reduce anxiety and enhance skills. That is, the observations of language production were real-world multilingual (not just L1 and targeted L2) and multicultural. International students offered the EMI classroom, with their different backgrounds and views, a more culturally diverse teaching and learning environment that benefited the domestic students and the instructor. Nowadays, there has been an increased use of readily available and increasingly sophisticated, and for the most part, quite accurate electronic translation software and applications. Integrating them into an EMI class appeared to prepare the students for multicultural and multilingual encounters in business and for pleasure (i.e., life and career skills), which will only become more frequent in years to come. That is, the class appeared to have advanced students beyond simple practical control of the L2, for which current electronic translation functions adequately. The students had to engage in serious multicultural interaction to reach higher L2 levels, both culturally and linguistically, in order to explore the lecture content. In other words, the students, all of whom were non-native English speakers, except one, were able to engage in active authentic language production, beyond traditional listening and speaking, and communicate with other students from a variety of backgrounds.

## **Student Perceptions of Ambitious Instruction**

Table 2 summarizes the participants’ interview responses according to eight identified overall themes, and the response transcripts are verbatim. Looking holistically, the implemented ambitious instruction approach anchored content knowledge to the real world, provided opportunities for investigative practices, sparked deep discourse and thinking, allowed for the presenting of work and ideas, provided access to learning tools, encouraged active learning, and promoted student autonomy. In other words, comments indicate that the students held

positive views of the approach and that it indeed captured the learning of 21st century competencies, namely learning and innovation skills and life and career skills.

**TABLE 2. Participant Comments by Theme**

Theme	Interviewee Comments	Theme	Interviewee Comments
Pleasant Surprise	Re-phrasing familiar Korean culture in English. A medium of different culture, history, and values.	Critical Thinking	Essay assignment on Korean society builds critical and logical thinking.
Various Media & Platform Usage	Diverse audio and visual software and materials.	Analytical Understanding	Korean culture and its relevant history. Refreshing retrospect into Korean culture from international perspectives. Personal enlightenment regarding cultural identity through student presentations and excursions.
Active Participation & Motivation	Mutual communication and close relationships between students and teacher.	Career Development	On- and offline data research for excursions, presentations, essays, and new skills like video editing.
Cultural Exchange	Students of different nationalities compare cultural insights on Korea through excursions. Native students had opportunities to communicate cultural understandings with foreign students via debates.	Pleasure	Fun due to field experience. Relatively less onerous learning environment with fun and creative activities. Learning outside the classroom improved relations between students and teacher.

## DISCUSSION

The instructor appears to have realized the seven desired learning outcomes of ambitious instruction predicted at the onset of the classes; that is, observations and comments suggest the pedagogy (a) connected learning to the real world, (b) engaged learners in investigative practices, (c) promoted deeper reflective thinking, (d) had students view their peers as resources for learning, (e) provided opportunities to present their work publicly, (f) introduced and prompted use of multimedia tools to encourage learning, and (g) gave students ample time to collectively reflect and comment on the lecture content.

Observations suggest the instructor successfully imparted to the students high performance expectations of the class. The students' lecture reflection file entries required and included reflections on and beyond lecture content, indicating stronger learning compared to rote memorization of a massive amount of content, which is often "dumped" from one's mind immediately after a test. The students took advantage of the ample opportunities to communicate both amongst themselves and with the instructor to suggest there was a strong feeling of shared belongingness and empowerment in the class, thereby fostering a positive environment for both international and domestic students. The students appeared to have realized the difference between learning for oneself and learning through outside pressure during the field trip and in class work. That is, the students appeared to be more concerned with their amount of collaboration and cooperation than a mere grade. Since the activities required a unified student body, the class appeared to have met, to some degree, the desire for non-L1-English universities, as suggested in Chun et al. (2017), to "create international places of study for foreign students" and "prepare globally minded graduates for the domestic workforce" (p. 952).

Outside the classroom, learning requires a whole-world approach beyond conventional academic boundaries (Claiborne et al. 2018). The students on excursions practiced a research-based activity, employed and expanded upon knowledge learnt in the classroom, advanced their social and cross-cultural engagement, and at the end of the experience, assessed their learning and conveyed that learning to others through a short video creation. The students in this course mirrored positive views, such as a deeper understanding and valuable experience during the field trips, as those of the students in the Chen (2012) study.

Banning L1 use completely in non-English-speaking-nation EMI classes harms communications and successful learning (Sampson, 2011). For example, Kang (2012) reported that university students in EMI classes can benefit from “using their native language [Korean] in pursuit of higher learning in their academic areas” (p. 31). Observing that students tried to express themselves through various means such as using available technology tools suggests they have gone beyond simple practical control of the L2 to real-world multilingual and multicultural communication. This is important, for the bar is higher nowadays, especially for serious interactions at business and political levels; for instance, multilingual public figures who, despite being able to use L2 (English), prefer to make important statements in their L1. Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks English, but it is rare for him to speak in English in public, and he never uses English in diplomatic situations (Schachter, 2013). Moreover, allowing controlled moderate use of L1 in the EMI class, the EMI instructor addressed the recommendation by Chun et al. (2017): EMI classes must address domestic students’ emotional challenges because English language anxiety impacts content understanding and grades.

University EMI class students as a group are typically technologically sophisticated in their L1 in a way not generally appreciated or put to practical use by EMI course instructors, possibly because the instructors are of a previous, and less exposed, generation. This electronic sophistication permitted extensive use of media and media platforms for ambitious instruction. Simply put, the practical application of electronic sources and skills were observed to expand and enhance the EMI environment.

General thematic comments collected from participants were use of various media and platforms, active participation and motivation, cultural exchange, critical thinking, analytical understanding, career development, and pleasure. They mirror results found in assessing whether the instructor met the seven desired learning outcomes of ambitious instruction. However, “pleasure” warrants further investigation. Also, more research is necessary on the idea of “fun” from the excursions, but it is conjectured to equate to curiosity, as it seemed to raise students’ desire to learn more intently. That is, it is speculated that what was learnt, discussed, and experienced during the excursions will likely not dissipate from the students’ minds but instead appears to be internalized.

## CONCLUSIONS

The seven desired learning outcomes for ambitious instruction were observable, and the approach was viewed positively. First, the pedagogy anchored content learning to the real world. Second, it allowed students to exercise investigative practices to support, develop, or validate ideas. Third, it used instructor discourse to promote deep thinking; and fourth, it had students act as learning resources while engaging in collaborative work and discussion. Fifth, it provided opportunities for students to present their work and thoughts publicly and introduced tools that support and encourage active learning. Last, it gave students occasions to reflect and comment on content and their learning.

However, no matter how good a teacher believes their teaching is or how good it has been evaluated to be, instruction alone cannot lead to successful student learning. Joint effort towards the class objectives by the instructor and the students can ultimately lead to effective learning. Ambitious instruction supports English in real communication. Its real-world approach promoted students' confidence and self-determination, and the peer interactions in the activities developed major and business competencies beyond the confines of a classroom. The students showed mature leadership responsibility working in groups and individually, both of which were supported by the instructor. By learning content in an interesting way and having hands-on access to real-world contexts, the students' sense of "fun" enhances their confidence, content knowledge, and English proficiency.

University instructors in general could not only adjust to the innovative demands of the times, but they could also have their students intellectually and socially flourish inside and outside of the classroom using ambitious instruction. According to Biesta and Tedder (2007) instructors must act "*by means* of their environment rather than simply in their environment" (p. 137). Ambitious instruction moves students beyond teacher-fronted lecturing of content to robust pedagogy that equips students with higher-order thinking skills, as well as gives them the capability, individually and collaboratively, to gain and create new knowledge to become productive, global citizens with resources and capability to engage in lifelong learning. The students in this EMI course were able to make personal bonds with peers from a variety of nations after successfully working towards group goals and with group responsibilities. Then, the relationship of effort, resources, and situation

interacted to determine agency, and “we can say that the achievement of agency depends on the availability of economic, cultural, and social resources within a particular ecology” (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137).

Today, university classes, L1 (English) and non-L1 nations offering EMI classes have the potential to expand and encompass real-world activities and achieve desirable, even “fun,” content-based course goals. The content in the classroom environment, especially in nations offering EMI classes, is constantly being researched. The current paper presents a teaching practice rather than research-only recommendations and offers perspectives and ideas for teaching in the classroom. In other words, ambitious instruction may help students and instructors alike connect class content in a hands-on way to the real world and bridge the gap between liberal arts and business academic approaches.

While the observations and outcomes are limited to instructor observations and student perceptions, they do shed light on the possibility of ambitious instruction at the university level, both at L1 (English) and non-L1 nations offering EMI classes. With ambitious instruction now identified as a possibility at the tertiary level, future studies should examine more objective data like comparing an ambitious instruction class with a control class. Also, because the instructor wanted the students’ view on the entire course, few students volunteered for semi-structured interviews at the end of the semester, so future studies should have interviews take place earlier in the course.

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## **Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Case of a Multicultural ELT Classroom in a Public Sector Asian University**

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Language learning and teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms is a challenge for both teachers and learners. Although multicultural classrooms are not rare in educational institutions in the Asian context, English language teachers' utilization of the distinct cultural identity that students bring into the classroom is not a common practice in many Asian countries, including Pakistan and Korea. Keeping in view the challenges that teachers face in dealing with a culturally heterogeneous group, the study was undertaken with the aim to capitalize on the cultural diversity of students by incorporating culturally responsive teaching to facilitate active classroom participation. The research design chosen for this study was action research (AR) with the sample size based on a group of 24 first-year students of the BSc (Honors) program in one of the departments of the Faculty of Science at the University of Karachi, Pakistan, where English language is taught as a compulsory course. The activities designed to help students project their own cultural identity as well as to acknowledge and appreciate others' culture centered around task-based learning (TBL) as well as problem-based learning with a focus on all four language skills. The incorporation of cultural elements not only helped the students improve their language proficiency but also promoted in them tolerance and appreciation for each other's culture. Moreover, the focus on culturally responsive teaching along with TBL led to learner autonomy. The study has important pedagogical implications not only for the Pakistani ELT community but also for Korean ELT practitioners as well as language teachers in other Asian countries as it challenges the belief that language learning takes place only through projection of the target language culture in the classroom.

*Keywords:* cultural diversity, multiculturalism, culturally responsive teaching, task-based learning, learner autonomy

## INTRODUCTION

Language teaching requires more experimentation and creativity as compared to subject teaching. Any language teaching methodology that works well in one class may fail miserably in another for a variety of reasons: the level of learners' language proficiency, size of the class in terms of the number of students, classroom management, or the selection of materials and tasks. Considering all these factors, ELT practitioners need to be more flexible in terms of the methodology they choose while teaching language to different groups of learners.

Irrespective of the methodology ELT practitioners employed in their classrooms in the past, there was probably too much emphasis on providing language learners an exposure to the target culture. It was believed that language learning could not be successful unless learners are acculturated. Studies were conducted to investigate the relationship between acculturation and second language learning (Stauble, 1980; Young & Gardner, 1990). Keeping in view the significance of acculturation, syllabi were designed with the aim to promote target language culture, and materials were chosen accordingly. Nevertheless, the excessive exposure to the target language culture and its glorification at the expense of ignoring learners' cultural identity resulted in the construction of a negative self-image on the part of learners. Considering the repercussions of neglecting the cultural diversity in language classrooms, scholars started questioning the use of only the target language culture while teaching a language (Jiang et al. 2009; Moran, 2001; Nault, 2006).

As a result of the objections raised by some research scholars against acculturation, there has been a shift from the imposition of the target language culture towards the integration of language learners' culture to utilize cultural diversity for language learning and teaching in multicultural classrooms in the last few decades. This paradigm shift has led to the emergence of culturally responsive teaching (also termed "culturally relevant pedagogy" or "culturally sustaining pedagogy"), particularly in English language classes, which according to Ladson-Billings (1995) has the "ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 468). While discussing the teachers' role in culturally responsive pedagogy, Gay (2010, p. 13) believes that teachers are required to use "cultural

knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles” of culturally diverse students present in their classes to make the entire learning experience meaningful and relevant for them. Being learner-centered, culturally responsive pedagogy not only promotes learner autonomy through active student engagement but also enhances critical thinking.

With reference to the ELT situation in the Pakistani context, especially at the tertiary level, where, unfortunately in many English classrooms, English is taught as a subject instead of a language and where teacher talk dominates student talk, culturally responsive teaching is neither widely known nor practiced. The situation is somewhat similar in Korea. Although Korea is less culturally diverse than Pakistan with few ethnolinguistic groups, it has witnessed an increase in the number of foreigners in the last few decades (Kim, 2020). Despite the emergence of cultural diversity, teachers in this country have not yet fully embraced culturally responsive pedagogy. The English language teachers in both Pakistan and Korea can be divided into two broad categories: culturally responsive teachers and culturally obstinate teachers. The former not only respect but also utilize the culture students bring into the classroom while the latter neither recognize nor respect students’ culture (Kim, 2020).

The aim of this study, therefore, is two-fold: to make culturally obstinate English language teachers aware of the significance of culturally responsive teaching along with the challenges they are likely to face while using this approach in their classes and to share with them different ways of dealing with the challenges through a variety of classroom activities that revolve around task-based learning.

## **Research Questions**

- RQ1. What are the challenges of teaching language to a culturally diverse group at the university level?
- RQ2. How can multiculturalism in an ELT classroom be utilized to facilitate language learning and promote learner autonomy?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Because of a growing concern for the loss of diverse cultures due

to globalization, culturally responsive teaching has drawn considerable attention of research scholars and educationists across the world. The popularity of culturally responsive pedagogy is evident from the publication of books that focus on the importance of adopting intercultural approaches to teaching in order to not only acknowledge and celebrate the cultural diversity that learners bring into their classrooms but also to promote social justice in education (Adams et al., 2007; Banks, 2006; Corbett, 2003; Gay 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Irvine & Armento, 2001; Nieto, 2002).

A vast body of research literature is available on exploring the significance of utilizing cultural diversity in education, with a specific focus on culturally responsive pedagogy (Agudelo, 2007; Baker, 2012; Brooks-Lewis, 2007; Byram, 2012; Gay, 20002; Ladson & Billings, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lopez, 2011; Nagarkar, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Studies based on exploring the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy are not just confined to language classrooms in school, college, or university settings; studies have also been conducted on its role in subject classrooms at different levels (Epstein et al., 2011; Laughter & Adams, 2012; Martell, 2013).

A qualitative case study by Curtin (2002) deserves special mention as it aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of immigrant students and their teachers with regard to culturally responsive teaching. The data of the study were based on non-participant classroom observation along with interviews of selected students and teachers of a middle school in Texas. Besides interviewing students and teachers, some administrative and supporting staff members were also interviewed for an in-depth understanding of the school policies regarding the needs of English language learners (ELLs). During their interviews, many students reported that they felt neglected in their mainstream classes as compared to the ELL classroom where the teachers tried to engage students in interaction and were responsive to their needs. The data based on classroom observation supported students' reporting as the mainstream teachers were not found to be culturally aware of their students' needs and therefore did not incorporate culturally relevant teaching into their classroom teaching practices. The findings of the study call for the need to train mainstream teachers to utilize culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms.

With a focus on investigating culturally responsive teaching practices of school and college as well as university teachers, Rhodes (2013)

conducted a study in Florida. The data for this study were collected through an online survey based on 17 teaching practices using Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. The findings of this online survey, in which 134 teachers participated, indicated that despite their claims to use some of the teaching practices included in the survey with varying degrees of frequency, the teachers had limited awareness about the link between their pedagogical practices and the underlying theory. The results of this study emphasize the need to train teachers to deal with culturally heterogeneous students in their classes. Despite its significance, the study has one major drawback in the sense that it solely makes use of an online survey. Had it been supported by classroom observations, the findings would have been considered more reliable.

If we take a closer look at the studies based on multiculturalism in education, we find that the existing body of research in this area has been conducted from different perspectives. In some studies exploring the usefulness of the intercultural approach to teaching, the major focus is on teachers' perceptions of using this kind of pedagogy in their classrooms (Brown, 2004; Bustos-Flores & Smith, 2008; Chang, 2015; Samuels, 2018; Young & Sachdev, 2011), while in others, the focus is on learners' perceptions of the utilization of their culture for language teaching and learning (Belli, 2018; Brooks-Lewis, 2014; Byrd, 2016). However, there are a few studies that focus on both teachers' and students' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy and its effectiveness in language learning (Kea et al., 2002; Rostami, 2016). Research on culturally responsive pedagogy has also been conducted with reference to classroom management (Brown, 2010; Weinstein et al., 2003).

In spite of the significance of culturally responsive teaching and the interest it has generated among researchers across the globe, there is little research on this kind of pedagogy in Korea and Pakistan where, as mentioned in the introduction, culturally obstinate teachers abound. A study conducted in Korea by Park et al. (2016) explored the relationship between Korean teachers' attitude towards cultural diversity and the influence of their attitude on the culturally diverse students' learning outcomes. Another study, Yeo (2016), aimed to examine Korean elementary teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity and the impact of their beliefs on their teaching practices with regard to multicultural education. Utilizing mixed methods, Yeo administered a survey on a

group of elementary teachers in the country followed by an in-depth interview of six teachers to get an insight into their beliefs about multicultural education. The findings of the study revealed that teachers with a positive attitude towards cultural diversity utilize multicultural teaching practices in their classes.

Besides the availability of research focusing on teachers' attitude towards culturally responsive pedagogy, there is also some research available on the role of multicultural education in the education policy of Korea. Kim (2020), for instance, examined the status of multicultural education in Asia, with a specific focus on Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. By tracing the history of multicultural education in these countries, the study presents a comparative analysis of the education policies of the three countries. The findings of the study call for the need to incorporate multicultural education in Korea and Japan, unlike Taiwan, where multicultural education is practiced, in Japan and Korea the excessive focus on cultural homogeneity prevents policymakers and curriculum designers from implementing multicultural education in the true sense. The findings of the study by Kim (2020) corroborate the findings of a study by Moon (2010), reinforcing the need to adopt a multicultural model of education in Korea instead of an assimilationist model that poses a serious threat to heritage languages and their culture.

As far as research on CRT in Pakistan is concerned, one of the research studies conducted in the Pakistani context by Pasha (2012) explored whether culturally responsive teaching was practiced in primary schools and whether teachers were provided opportunities to learn ways to employ this kind of pedagogy in their classrooms. The findings of the study not only indicated the absence of culturally responsive teaching in schools but also revealed the absence of any training based on this kind of teaching for in-service teachers in the country. Since there was no component on culturally responsive pedagogy in the curriculum designed for teacher education programs in Pakistan, the study draws attention to the need for incorporating it in the curriculum along with providing in-service training to teachers so that they can employ it in their classrooms.

Another study based on investigating culturally responsive teaching in the Pakistani context is one by Farrukh and Bukhari (2018). In order to explore whether there is any difference in the degree of diversity between general and inclusive schools and whether teachers employ culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, Farrukh and Bukhari

(2018) administered a survey based on 150 primary school teachers in Lahore, one of the major cities of Pakistan. The findings of their study were similar to the study by Pasha (2012) as both the studies revealed the absence of culturally responsive teaching in primary school classrooms in the country.

As evident from the review of the existing research literature on culturally responsive teaching in Pakistan, research in this area is not only limited to primary schools in the country but is also confined to small-scale surveys. Hence, the current study was undertaken with the aim to conduct action research in an English language classroom at the university level to explore the challenges of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy and how to actually overcome the challenges that English language teachers are likely to encounter while employing this approach in culturally diverse classrooms.

## **METHOD**

Since this qualitative study was undertaken with the aim to explore how culturally responsive teaching works in an English language classroom and how to deal with the challenges that language teachers may encounter while employing culturally responsive teaching (CRT), action research was chosen as the research design. According to Burns (2010, p. 2), action research “involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts.” For conducting this qualitative action research in a systematic way, the eight steps proposed by McNiff and Whitehead, (2002, p. 71) were followed. These steps are (a) a review of the current practice(s), (b) identification of the aspect that the teacher wishes to explore in order to improve his/her pedagogical practices, (c) making a plan to incorporate culturally responsive teaching by designing classroom activities accordingly, (d) implementation of the plan, (e) observation and reflection on how the plan works, (f) making modifications to the plan on the basis of reflection throughout the study, (g) implementation and evaluation of the modified plan of action, and (h) repeating the cycle until there is some satisfactory result.

The study was conducted in a department of the Faculty of Science at the University of Karachi, which is one of the largest public sector universities in Pakistan. Being a teacher at the same university, it was

not difficult for me to access any department to conduct this action research, as English is a compulsory subject taught to the students of BS, BE, BA (Hons), and BSc (Hons) programs in all the departments in the first year, either in the first or second semester.

Although there is a certain degree of cultural diversity found in almost all the classrooms at the University of Karachi, I had the privilege of teaching a class that had students not only from diverse cultures but also diverse nationalities. It was a group of twenty-four students out of which there were 18 Pakistani students with different ethnolinguistic backgrounds (six Urdu speakers, three Sindhi and three Balochi speakers, two Punjabi and two Gujrati speakers, and one speaker each of the Balti, Burushaski, and Pashto languages) along with six international students from different countries (two Afghan nationals with Dari as their mother tongue, three Somali speakers from Somalia, and one Kenyan national who was a Kalenjin speaker, a language spoken by the Kalenjin people of Southern Nilotic tribes from East Africa living in Kenya). Out of the twenty-four students, there were eighteen male and six female students.

In order to conceal the identities of the research participants for this study, each was assigned a code. The background of the participants based on their language, nationality, and gender is given in Table 1.

The tools employed for data collection for this action research included classroom observation, a reflective journal, students' written feedback collected on anonymous slips after each session and written samples of students' work. The reflective journal, being one of the major tools for data collection, was employed for bracketing, which according to Gearing (2004, as cited in Tufford & Newman, 2010) is a "scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon" (p. 83). Since bracketing helps minimize the effects of researchers' preconceptions, it is essential to employ it in all phases of research. The maintenance of the reflective journal helped me bracket my own preconceived notions and biases as a researcher, which in turn led to a better awareness of my learners' psychology.

In order to increase the credibility of my research, I also wanted to have a *critical friend* for my study but none who qualified for this were available during this class time, so I had to abandon bringing in a critical friend for observations. Initially, I thought of video-recording my classes,

**TABLE 1. Background of the Research Participants Based on Their Language and Nationality**

Participants' Code	Native Language	Nationality	Gender
S1	Urdu	Pakistani	Female
S2	Urdu	Pakistani	Female
S3	Urdu	Pakistani	Male
S4	Urdu	Pakistani	Male
S5	Urdu	Pakistani	Male
S6	Urdu	Pakistani	Male
S7	Sindhi	Pakistani	Female
S8	Sindhi	Pakistani	Male
S9	Sindhi	Pakistani	Male
S10	Balochi	Pakistani	Female
S11	Balochi	Pakistani	Male
S12	Balochi	Pakistani	Male
S13	Gujrati	Pakistani	Female
S14	Gujrati	Pakistani	Female
S15	Punjabi	Pakistani	Male
S16	Punjabi	Pakistani	Male
S17	Balti	Pakistani	Male
S18	Burushaski	Pakistani	Male
S19	Pashto	Pakistani	Male
S20	Dari	Afghan	Male
S21	Dari	Afghan	Male
S22	Somali	Somali	Male
S23	Somali	Somali	Male
S24	Kalenjin	Kenyan	Male

so I approached the students to seek their consent. The male students had no reservations about being recorded, but the female students were not comfortable with the idea. So, adhering to the ethics of research, I changed my plan of video-recording the sessions to make my research participants feel at ease.

This action research was based on the data collected in the first sixteen sessions of the semester. The duration for each session was fifty

minutes, and all of the sixteen sessions exclusively revolved around task-based learning through multicultural activities that were designed to explore the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy.

### **Data Analysis Based on Action Research**

Since the aim of this study was to raise intercultural sensitivity of the students in a multicultural English language classroom by employing culturally responsive pedagogy through action research, this section presents a detailed account of the phases of my action research along with critical reflections and students' feedback.

The first session started with a warm-up activity in which students were asked for a self-introduction by providing some background information about their religion, nationality, native town, ethnicity, and mother tongue. In order to make this warm-up activity interesting, the students were also asked to share their weaknesses and strengths using one adjective for each. This warm-up served a dual purpose: It helped students to know each other and also provided them exposure to a few adjectives that some of them were not familiar with. For instance, when S2 used the adjectives *optimistic* and *impulsive*, the former to describe her strength and the latter to describe her weakness; S6 used the adjective *aggressive* to describe his weakness; while S24 used the adjective *prudent* to describe his strength. These adjectives were new to a majority of the students in the class.

After the warm-up, the students were asked to form cross-cultural pairs so that they could engage in an activity based on cultural exchange. This activity required the students to interact with each other and get as much information about each other's culture as possible. Since the task had to be completed in ten minutes, the students were instructed to be focused and avoid indulging in irrelevant discussion. While they were engaged in this cultural exchange activity, as a teacher-researcher, I took field notes based on observation. While taking the field notes, I was also engaged in critical reflection, as in action research, reflection-in-practice is as important as reflection-on-practice. During the observation, I noticed that the foreign students in the class were a little reluctant to interact with the local students as they saw the local students using bilingual (Urdu/English) discourse. So, I requested the students to use only English so that the foreign students did not feel alienated. After getting information about each other's culture, each pair was asked to

report what they had discovered. The activity helped construct a friendly environment conducive to learning. Nevertheless, despite students' interest in the task, some of the local students were not confident enough to share what information they had gathered about their classmates' culture. When asked about the reason for not sharing the gathered information, they said they are not fluent enough in English. Since I did not want them to feel marginalized in the very first session, I allowed them to report the information using Urdu at places where they found it difficult to communicate in English. I had to work as a translator for the foreign students in the class so that they did not feel excluded. However, I made it clear to the students that I would not act as their translator in every class.

In the second session, the students were engaged in a reading task based on superstitious beliefs held by people of different cultures. After reading a text based on some superstitious beliefs found in certain cultures, the students were instructed to engage in oral interaction with a focus on sharing the superstitious beliefs held by people in their own culture. The students thoroughly enjoyed this activity as they got an opportunity to project their culture in the classroom. Although the students looked excited to talk about the superstitious beliefs in their culture, some of them were seen making fun of the superstitious beliefs shared by one of the foreign students from Somalia. When I noticed this during my observation, I had to intervene. However, instead of an explicit warning, I asked those students how they would feel, if their classmates made fun of some aspect of their culture. The students understood the indirect warning and apologized to the Somali student who they had made fun of. If students are not taught to respect others' culture, they tend to develop a negative attitude towards every culture that is in contrast to their own beliefs and cultural practices. Hence, it was my duty as a teacher-researcher to make them aware of the significance of cultural diversity so that they not only become tolerant of this diversity but actually learn to value it.

To reinforce the importance of cultural diversity, the third session was based on asking students to share their worldview through proverbs. The foreign students outperformed the local students in this activity by showing familiarity with the proverbs in their language, which they shared with the entire class by providing the English translation of the proverbs used in their language. In contrast to the foreign students, the local students hardly showed any familiarity with the proverbs of their

language, which calls for the need to provide exposure to the local proverbs in both home and educational domains. It is the duty of both parents and teachers to provide rigorous exposure to the proverbs used in the local context as they embody a great deal of cultural knowledge of a community. The significance of utilizing proverbs for language teaching has also been discussed in different research studies (Brosh, 2013; Nuessel, 2003).

In order to fill in this existing gap in the local students' knowledge of proverbs, I shared a few examples of proverbs from Urdu, in the fourth session. Where it was not possible to provide literal translation, the implied meanings of the selected Urdu proverbs were translated into English and were shared with the students so that the students could develop some interest in the proverbs found in their own native language. They were not only provided examples of Urdu proverbs with English translations but were also assigned the task of looking for proverbial expressions that carry the same implied meaning in their own language. Since it was a do-at-home task, the students were allowed to seek help from their parents, grandparents, or any other member of the family, or use whatever resources they might have access to, which they did and brought interesting examples to the fifth session. When they were asked to write their anonymous feedback on the task, one of the students (S7) wrote, "I never thought of learning proverbs in my language before and first time I learn there significant. I ask my parents to tell more proverbs. They have help me learn my culture." Although the language used by this student is grammatically incorrect, the feedback indicates that the task served its purpose and proved to be effective.

In the sixth session, 12 different taglines of Pakistani advertisements promoting certain brands were shared with the students. The students, working individually, selected any one of the taglines to transform it in such a way that it would harmonize with the culture of that student. The transformation of taglines not only provided a glimpse of students' cultural beliefs but also revealed their creativity. For instance, one of the Kenyan students transformed the tagline of Lipton Yellow Label Tea, "*jaage~ un ke liye jo vaaqai e'ham he'~*" (meaning "Stay awake for those who are really important to you"), to "The choice of runners!" Since Kenyans have broken many world records in running, the use of this tagline provided a glimpse at what the country is famous for worldwide. Another example was the tagline for K&N's chicken: "*taake*

*aap ke piyaaro~ ko milti rahe* safe and healthy chicken” (meaning, “So that your loved ones can keep getting safe and healthy chicken”). This was transformed by a Somali student to “Because my health matters,” which is representative of an individualistic culture as opposed to the collectivistic culture projected through the original tagline of K&N’s. Although there was a stark contrast between the original taglines and the transformed taglines that foreign students produced, there was not much cultural difference in the taglines transformed by the local students except in the choice of lexical items. For instance, one of the female Sindhi speakers transformed the tagline of Mitchells squash, jams, jellies, and marmalades, “A whole lot of love,” to “Tradition of love.”

The seventh session was based on an activity that focused on culture shock. Students from different regions of Pakistan as well as those from other countries present in the class were asked to share instances of culture shock based on their experience in Karachi, while those from Karachi were asked to share examples of culture shock that they had experienced during cross-cultural interaction outside the city or country if they had traveled to different places. This activity led to a great deal of awareness about miscommunication that could arise in cross-cultural interactions because of differences in the sociocultural norms of people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as diverse nationalities. The activity also enhanced students’ understanding of cultural differences, the knowledge of which is essential in avoiding miscommunication that could either result in communication conflict or communication breakdown.

Despite the fact that the majority of the students actively participated in the task, there were two female Urdu native speakers and one male Urdu native speaker who had nothing to share. When asked about their non-participation, they claimed not to have traveled outside Karachi. As a teacher-researcher, I realized that the instructions I gave to the students of Karachi for this task were based on my assumption that they must have traveled at least outside the city, if not outside the country. After reflecting on the three students’ inability to participate in this activity, I realized that instructions should not be based on mere assumptions.

In order to minimize the risk of miscommunication in cross-cultural encounters, in the eighth session, the students were engaged in a task titled Bridging the Gap. The task, as the name suggests, required the students to work in culturally diverse trios and look for solutions to remove the communication gap that could arise because of cultural

differences. The task, despite being fruitful, had one major drawback. It could not elicit any response in the form of solution from two of the trios, as the participants in both of the trios could not arrive at any unanimous agreement regarding the solutions needed to connect diverse groups. As a teacher-researcher, I had to intervene at this point to make them realize that the inability to arrive at any unanimous decision does not necessarily indicate disrespect for others' point of view; it can also be a sign of people's distinct cultural identity, which they have the right to project. As a reinforcement of the projection of their distinct cultural identity, students were given an article for reading in session nine, highlighting differences in people's worldview based on their cultural background and the unique customs and traditions practiced in their community.

The next two sessions, sessions ten and eleven, were based on reading and writing. However, before engaging the students in reading and writing tasks, I asked them if they had ever read or written a letter to the editor and to my surprise none of them answered in the affirmative. So, I provided them some background information about the significance of writing a letter to the editor and also discussed the pattern for writing such letters. After providing them with the background information, I shared with the students a few samples that I had selected from different locally published English newspapers. The students were assigned the task of reading the samples to become familiar with how the issues are highlighted to draw the attention of the authorities. While they were reading the sample letters, the students from other countries were also asked to compare and contrast the issues discussed in these letters with the ones they have in their own country. As far as the local students are concerned, they were asked to think of other issues that needed to be addressed. After reading the letters and the following discussion in trios, the students were asked to write a letter to the editor on an issue that they thought needed to be resolved at its earliest. They were instructed to focus on the problem(s) that people face in their community.

In the twelfth session, which was a continuation of the previous two sessions, the students were asked to read each other's letter and propose solutions that actually reflected their thought patterns related to their cultural background. It proved to be a highly productive task, which was evident from the students' engagement in the task. They not only gave feedback on each other's letter to the editor but also shared

practical solutions to the problems that their classmates had highlighted in their letter. This task with a focus on problem-based learning succeeded in reinforcing the importance of learner empowerment or learner autonomy, as the students were given the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving, which require the use of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS).

The last four sessions were based on another writing task, one in which the students were required to share their experience of studying at the University of Karachi. Since they had already spent more than a month at the university, I thought of providing them the opportunity to share their experience in writing, which I also planned to share with the head of their department so that their department administration could learn about students' point of view and, if possible, address the problems they face. One of the foreign students wrote the following:

I like the university and the people here. My classmats are very cooperative but one problem is some teachers teach in Urdu most of time. They speak very little English in class. We can't understood there lecture. They don't translate it in English for us. (S22)

The point raised by this student needs to be addressed, as the newly admitted foreign students cannot understand Urdu. Attending a bilingual lecture in which Urdu dominates may be an extremely frustrating experience for such students as they feel linguistically handicapped in Urdu in their first year.

After the students wrote the first draft in session thirteen, they participated in peer editing in session fourteen. For peer editing, a checklist was devised in collaboration with the students so that they could learn what to look for while editing each other's draft. On the basis of the feedback they received from their peers, they wrote their second draft in session fifteen and submitted it for teacher feedback. In the sixteenth session, I returned the students' second draft with my written feedback. The students were asked to further refine their second draft on the basis of the written feedback in the same session. Being the last session of the study, the students were also asked to share in writing their experience of the tasks they were engaged in during the course of this study. In order to elicit honest responses from the students, they were instructed to give anonymous written feedback on the classroom activities and the take-home tasks they were assigned.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was motivating for me as a teacher-researcher to read the students' comments on the tasks that were designed for this study, which indicated the successful incorporation of culturally responsive pedagogy in an English language classroom. One of the foreign students (S24), for instance, particularly liked the idea of providing each student the opportunity to project their culture in the classroom, which he admitted not to have experienced in any of his classes in his entire academic career. In his words, "I thought in English classes we only learn British and American culture but it is so good to talk about our own culture." The students felt empowered, as one of the local students (S16) claimed, "I have never feel so proud of my culture before. Thank you for giving me chance to share my culture with others." It was not only the foreign students who felt a sense of being recognized but also the local students, particularly those from the remote areas of Pakistan, who felt good because of being given the opportunity to project their distinct cultural and ethnolinguistic identity. The findings of this study suggest the effectiveness of using CRT in English language classrooms in Pakistani universities.

However, despite the successful utilization of this approach in the local context, the challenges faced during the implementation of CRT call for the need to provide proper training to both new and in-service teachers, who may be unfamiliar with this approach and therefore unable to benefit from it. One of the major challenges while using CRT involves selection of the tasks that students are to engage in, especially the reading materials chosen for culturally diverse groups. If the texts are not judiciously selected and are based on the projection of only one culture, they fail to provide the rigorous exposure that students need to understand cultural diversity. In order to cope with this challenge, teachers can select reading material from a variety of sources, like articles from local and foreign newspapers, magazines, especially National Geographic magazine, which includes articles on different themes, including articles that take readers on a cultural trip to different parts of the world with a focus on unique customs and traditions.

Another major challenge is creating an environment that is face saving rather than face threatening for all the learners so that they not only become tolerant towards each other's culture, including the culture of the target language, but also take pride in their unique cultural

identity associated with their home language. Moreover, while being conscious of students' biased judgments about others' culture, teachers should also be equally conscious of their own prejudices when teaching a culturally diverse group. A major challenge that I had to face as a teacher-researcher was to maintain a neutral stance during cross-cultural interactions in the classroom to avoid any cultural bias. If teachers are not conscious of the discourse they construct with the joint efforts of their students in the classroom, it may result in communication conflicts or communication breakdown. I had to be extra cautious about my classroom interactions to avoid giving any impression of favoring one group over the other.

Yet another major challenge is dealing with the reticent students, who, if left unattended, can feel marginalized and develop an inferiority complex. If the teachers' focus is only on the active participants in the classroom, the non-participants may cease to make any efforts to engage in classroom tasks. In order to get such students to participate in classroom activities, teachers can use extrinsic motivation techniques, which may include announcement of extra points or some other reward.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the findings of this study that most of the tasks that were designed and implemented in the classroom not only resulted in promoting learner autonomy but also helped students value collaborative learning through pair and group work, providing them with a range of opportunities to discover the uniqueness associated with each other's distinct cultural identity. Moreover, the students showed sufficient improvement in their use of English language in both spoken and written forms. The final draft of the writing task, particularly, showed significant improvement in the learners' writing skills, especially their choice of vocabulary and sentence construction.

## Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

A major limitation of this study is that it was conducted on a small group, and therefore the results cannot be generalized. How learners

respond to culturally responsive pedagogy may vary from one group to another, especially in case of a large group. Hence, a similar study on a large group could be undertaken in the future to explore the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. The learners' response to CRT may also vary from one country to the other. For instance, if a similar study is replicated in Korea, the results may not necessarily be the same because of the different perception of teachers and students in these two countries.

Another possibility is to conduct an experimental study on culturally diverse groups in two English language classes where one class can be treated as the control group and the other as the treatment group to examine the effect of intervention through culturally responsive pedagogy on students' language proficiency. Research could also be conducted on exploring the attitude of English language teachers and learners towards the use of culturally responsive teaching at the university level both in the Pakistani and Korean contexts. Last but not the least, a comparative study could also be undertaken to explore similarities and differences in terms of the challenges teachers face while utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy in public and private sector universities in Pakistan and Korea.

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# The Impact of Online Teaching on Students' Performance and Teachers' New Role During the COVID-19 Crisis

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Along with other countries, the COVID-19 crisis has made it necessary for Bangladesh to close down their schools since March 2020. More than a year later, Bangladesh is still struggling to find effective ways to continue with online teaching and learning activities. In this paper, I describe how I used an online platform to teach the English language module Advanced Reading and Writing. The objectives of this study were to understand the effectiveness of online teaching with all the limitations to integrating technology and to determine the teachers' role in transforming traditional teaching methods to an online platform. The data collected from 30 students showed a significant difference in their performance and the interviews with 10 teachers revealed their willingness to tackle the challenges of teaching online. Yet, it is too early to suggest that the shift to the online platform is the ultimate solution, as there are several relevant issues that have emerged and need to be addressed.

*Keywords:* technology, barrier, integration, COVID-19

## INTRODUCTION

As the outbreak of COVID-19 has slowed down activities throughout the world, Bangladesh is struggling to find alternative ways to continue education. The entire country has been in total lockdown in a bid to contain the coronavirus since late March 2020. As a result, almost all daily activities have been put on hold for schools at all levels and with higher educational institutions being at the forefront (Khan, Hossain, & Abdou, 2020). The Government of Bangladesh postponed the activities of all kinds of educational institutions across the country since March 17, 2020. More than 36 million students have been affected by the

interruption of regular academic activities due to COVID-19 (Mahtab, 2020).

In the beginning, the instruction from the government was to keep all institutions shut down for two weeks. However, as the number of infections and deaths kept increasing, the institutions remained closed for an indefinite period. No one could predict that the lockdown would linger for months and that there would be a profound effect on regular academic activities. Khan et al. (2020) stated that the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh were reluctant to approve online education as an alternative during the coronavirus lockdown. However, in order to facilitate student progress on all kinds of exams, on April 30, 2020, the education minister advised all universities to continue academic activities online with the full support of the ministry and the UGC (Abdullah, 2020).

## **Country Context**

Bangladesh is a densely populated country in South Asia. The estimated population in 2020 is 166.17 million (Bangladesh Population, 2021). According to the World Bank (The World Bank in Bangladesh 2019, 2019), Bangladesh is described as a lower middle-income country with a per capita income of US\$ 2176.19, the majority of the people (63%) live in the rural areas, and World Bank data reveal that 93% of the total population in Bangladesh has access to electricity among which 88.8% is rural population. According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) statistics, the total number of internet subscribers in the country in August 2020 was 108.88 million (Internet Users..., 2020). The Bangladesh National ICT Household Survey (2018–2019) reports that the overall use by internet users is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, which is 54.8% and 34.8%, respectively. The users are predominantly young adults aged 15–34 years. English is widely used in education, entertainment, commerce, trade, official correspondence, personal communication, and in many more sectors (Roy, 2017). English now has the status of a second language since 2001 because of its unparalleled global significance (Islam, 2012).

In order to take technology to every layer of life, including education, the present government aims to achieve the vision of transforming Bangladesh into a digital economy by 2021 and a

knowledge-based economy by 2041 (UNB, 2019). The present democratic government has created “Vision 2021,” which is also known as “Digital Bangladesh.” It embraces the democratic rights of the people, transparency, accountability, establishment of justice, and ensuring the delivery of government services to each door through maximum use of technology with the ultimate goal of improving the daily life of the general population. The government’s Digital Bangladesh includes all classes of people and does not discriminate in terms of technology (Habib & Baizid, 2010).

With this scenario as the backdrop, Bangladesh is now offering education through online platforms to students at all levels. The government’s attempt to transform the country into Digital Bangladesh has not been without challenges. Various studies on the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) in Bangladesh have brought to light several problems, education being one of the major areas that struggles in implementing technology. Jahan (2021) mentioned poor connectivity, limited access to smartphones, cost of mobile data, technical issues in video calls, and hampered communication as the challenges of online education among students in rural areas. Along with similar challenges of hampered communication among students of all backgrounds, Mortuza (2021) reflected on the increase in students’ anxiety, depression, insomnia, and suicidal thoughts that grew out of the lack of family support due to COVID-19. Delving into the impact of COVID 19 on Bangladeshi students, Dutta and Smita (2020) found that a few students were dissatisfied with their teachers’ expertise in technology because the teachers were not sufficiently prepared for teaching classes online as they lacked knowledge required to conduct online courses. The universities did not have effective online learning management systems. These students preferred face-to-face classes over online classes, as they found online classes boring and less interactive.

The education situation in South Korea during the pandemic is similar to the situation in Bangladesh. Being close to China, South Korea was one of the countries to be hit by COVID-19 earlier than other countries. Nam (2020) stated that the development of e-learning has been remarkable in South Korea. A 2019 survey suggests 89.0% of educational institutions, apart from the cyber universities, were using e-learning in 2019, which is an increase of 0.6% compared to 2018. However, in the 2020 school year, COVID-19 led almost all classes at universities to conduct online real-time classes and on-demand content

classes as an alternative methodology to face-to-face classes. Bahk (2020) found that this shift resulted in anxiety and frustration among some English language instructors who were unfamiliar with online teaching. In addition to that, university students complained about the lack of school preparation for online instruction. In February 2020, the Association of Student Councils network surveyed 12,213 students and found that 83.8% of the students wanted a tuition reduction or refund from their universities because they felt that online learning was inferior to face-to-face classes (Bahk, 2020, cited in Bailey & Lee, 2020).

While studying the situation of emergency remote learning (ERT) in South Korea, Choi et al. (2021) found that the transition to an online platform focused on ensuring the continuity of learning for students. They also pointed out teachers' numerous challenges in adjusting to online teaching with little preparation. The challenges on the part of the teachers were low familiarity with online teaching, increased workload in terms of teaching preparation, engaging students and assessing their learning outcomes, and experiencing distress over their interrupted relationships with students. In her reflection on ERT as a teacher-researcher during the coronavirus pandemic in a multicultural EAP classroom in South Korea, Chang (2020) found critical technological limitations in the newly added function of an automatic attendance-check system on the university learning management system, which caused serious and long communication disruptions between the teacher-researcher and students. Also, the lack of quick institutional decisions by the administration together with frequent short-term decisions from the government significantly delayed the teacher-researcher's initial ERT transition.

## **Teaching Context**

After the government's announcement to conduct online classes, the authorities at Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB), where I am currently teaching, instructed all teachers to start online classes, even though many of them had never used technology inside the classroom and had never received any training on how to incorporate technology into the teaching program. The students also had never faced this kind of situation. The entire scenario was very new to both the teachers and the students as the situation of teaching and learning changed from a traditional physical classroom set-up to an online platform. Instead of

learning taking place face-to-face in the presence of a teacher, students were now required to sit in front of a screen to attend classes. All of a sudden, the importance of technology became very prominent. In normal times, technology in Bangladeshi tertiary-level institutions was limited to delivering lectures using PowerPoint slides, but now it had become a tool for all teaching and learning activities, as teachers became more engaged with technology going beyond mere PowerPoints to using other tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Google Drive to deliver lectures and give tests, quizzes, and exams.

Ur (2012) describes technology as an integral part of our professional and personal activities and no longer a supplementary aspect of daily living. In many teaching and learning scenarios, working on computers with extensive use of various apps and access to the internet is as routine as pen and paper or the black- and whiteboard (Ur, 2012, cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). Bax (2003), on the other hand, found that the challenge teachers faced was how to integrate technology to engage students in various tasks. The use of technology needs to be understood in relation to a teacher's aims and role and its use in the curriculum. Access to specific technologies and the support of the institution in incorporating their use is essential. The teachers' personal confidence in using technology is also a factor in decision-making (Bax, 2003, cited in Slaouti, 2013).

The matter of teaching online in order to maintain social distancing has brought to the forefront issues such as integrating and accessing technology, using relevant tasks, teachers' confidence and decisions, the institution's support, and the students' perceptions regarding online learning. Therefore, the objectives of this study were (a) to understand the effectiveness of online teaching with all the limitations to integrating technology into the teaching program, and (b) to determine the teachers' role in transforming the traditional teaching methods into an online platform due to the pandemic.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The reality of online teaching has shed light on the many struggles that the stakeholders have to go through. Recent studies during the pandemic and also previous studies suggest similar struggles in technology-enhanced teaching and learning environments in a majority of

countries.

## **State of Online Teaching in the Global Context**

Sahu (2020) stated that to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus among the younger and adult populations, many countries have implemented the widespread closure of schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions. Since March 25, 2020, 150 countries have closed schools and educational institutions nationwide and shifted to an online platform for teaching and learning, which impacted over 80% of the world's student population.

In his study on the global impact of e-learning, Soni (2020) identified various disruptions, such as teachers' lack of online teaching skills, lack of proper technical support, taking a long time to prepare lesson plans, and internet issues. The findings also revealed the challenges that the students face, such as their lack of a proper learning attitude and non-availability of appropriate materials for online learning. Many of them cannot even discipline themselves due to an improper learning environment at home. In line with this, a study based on surveying the students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China, by Forrester (2020) revealed that, despite having excellent internet and a general widespread ownership of mobile devices, some students reported not having a webcam or working microphone on their laptop. Also, the poor living environment of many students was not ideal for learning. The teachers found it challenging to arrange discussions with a group of students when one or more had this type of living environment.

A comparative study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lifestyles, mental health, and quality of life in adults in South Korea suggests that along with the decline in physical and other meaningful activities, there is a significant amount of decline in education (Park et al., 2021). A similar study on orthopedic resident education in South Korea found that working time in the operating room and education time, such as lectures and clinical discussions, decreased significantly during the pandemic. The increase in online-based teaching methods resulted in a lower level of satisfaction among the students (Chang et al., 2020). An empirical study during COVID-19 comparing distance learning methods between Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice (Poland) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul (South Korea) highlighted the dissatisfaction of distance learning among the

academic teachers and students in both universities because of the ineffectiveness of online teaching. The dissatisfaction was due to the longer time to prepare online materials, infrequent interaction, and teachers' doubts about the originality of students' work (Juszczak & Kim 2020).

## **The State of Online Teaching in Bangladesh**

Shama and Ikbal (2020) found no significant data in support of online education in Bangladesh. However, they mentioned that there is a long-running tradition of distant education through Bangladesh Open University, where printed materials are provided to students and classes are delivered over radio and TV. Mahtab (2020) stated that incorporating online learning is not a viable option for Bangladesh yet. People living in rural areas have less access to ICT than the urban and richer regions. With such a vast digital gap, asking everyone to go online will only have a significant impact on learning inequality. One study (Huq 2020, cited in Khan et al., 2020) mentioned that universities, polytechnics, and other institutions of higher education faced countless challenges in rapidly dealing with this unique situation to transfer from a physical setup to an online platform. Since online teaching and learning is new to a majority of students and teachers, all concerned were not convinced of the prospect of online education in Bangladesh. The study also reported that some teachers were not hopeful about it, especially when it comes to courses that involve much practice.

Several studies on the situation of online teaching in Bangladesh have revealed similar facts. According to Ramij and Sultana (2020), the main argument against online classes in developing countries like Bangladesh is a lack of proper internet connection with stable speed. Even if students are able to attend online classes, the experience is extremely ineffective because they have trouble following the lecture and communicating with teachers because the network breaks down frequently. This problem became worse for the students, who had been residing in a village during the pandemic, because of the disruptions of the internet and electricity. Online classes also discourage class participation, as most of the students do not own a laptop or computer, and it is also not possible to do all kinds of tasks on a smartphone. Mortuza (2021) describes one of his students as having to type a 2000-word essay on the smartphone, which the student found extremely

difficult to do.

Mahmuda (2016) mentions five key barriers to educational technology adoption in the developing world, such as Bangladesh. The barriers she found include power, internet connectivity and bandwidth, quality teacher training, respect and better pay for teachers, and sustainability of implementations. Power is essential to run technological devices, and until it is broadly available, reliable, and affordable, educational technology support will be slow. If funding agencies in developing countries like Bangladesh are willing to support technological initiatives, they should also consider how power will be provided to these devices. In line with the above findings, Khan et al. (2012) and Parvin (2013) also found that the effective use of ICT in Bangladesh would require the availability of equipment, supplies of computers, and their proper maintenance, including other accessories. Many of the rural areas in Bangladesh do not have electricity, and therefore one cannot even run a computer in the first place. Along with the lack of electricity, insufficient funds, and teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using technology; teachers do not feel encouraged to design, develop, and integrate technology into the teaching and learning situation. Habib and Baizid (2010) also believe that to make "Digital Bangladesh" a reality, an uninterrupted power supply is mandatory. Outside the capital city, Dhaka, only a few computer networks have been developed so far, which reveals the reality of the digital gap even within the country. These suggest that there is a strong correlation between English literacy and ICT development in the present context of globalization.

## **Teachers' Role in Technology-Enhanced Teaching**

Despite the challenges that teachers have had to face to teach online, the shift from the traditional classroom teaching environment to an online platform had to be made with the limited available resources. All of a sudden, teachers were placed in a new teaching situation for which almost none of them were ready. Nevertheless, they had to embrace this change and tried to discover ways to fit into the new roles that they were now expected to take on.

According to Bitner and Bitner (2002), to successfully integrate technology into the curriculum and to play positive roles, teachers have to overcome the fear and anxiety of change. They have to participate in training to incorporate technology into teaching, enhance their personal

interest and skills, develop awareness of different kinds of programs and tools to be used, and become partners with students in the learning process. A climate must be created where teachers would not have any fear of failure in experimenting with new tools. They need to be motivated to tolerate the frustration and confusion of the change process and given support in technical and curriculum areas. In the new technology-supported classrooms, teachers need to take up roles of instructional designer, trainer, collaborator, student, silent partner, team coordinator, advisor, and monitoring and assessment specialist apart from playing traditional roles as class leader or director, lecturer, information giver, and discussion leader (Murchú, 2005). Effective integration of technology is the result of many factors, but the most important factor is the teachers' competence and ability to shape instructional technology activities to meet the students' needs. Teachers know their content and pedagogy, but when it comes to technology, teachers often learn along with their students (Gorder, 2008).

Dabhi (2013) suggests that it is time for the teachers to make teaching and learning meaningful activities with ICT. There has to be changes in pedagogy and behavior to fit into the new environment. ICT helps go beyond rote memorization. Learning becomes the creation of knowledge through tools, devices, information connectivity, collaboration, and communication, making the boundary of time and space disappear. Brown and Lee (2015) stated that they believe teachers need to acknowledge that today's learners are digital learners who have a tendency to blur the boundary between personal and academic engagement. They may listen to music while doing an assignment or constantly check Facebook postings. Teachers therefore need to promote collaborative learning activities using technology. They should be aware of the challenges of maintaining up-to-date information, knowledge, and resources available on the internet.

## **METHOD**

This study was done using the mixed method approach in order to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. The tools adopted for data collection of the two objectives were in-depth personal interviews to determine the teachers' role in the online teaching and learning environment and observation of two sets of results (i.e., midterm

and final exams) to understand if there were any significant changes in the students' performance on the examinations taken during the pandemic after they were taught online. The samples were selected through non-probability purposive sampling. Data were collected from 30 participants who were in my course, Advanced Reading and Writing, and 10 teachers from two private universities in Dhaka. The quantitative data (two sets of results) were analyzed through a paired *t* test using SPSS 20.0. A paired *t* test is used when we are interested in the differences between two variables for the same subject (Wray & Bloomer, 2013). Often the two variables are separated by time. The qualitative data (i.e., the teacher interviews) were analyzed through thematic coding (Flick, 2009). In order to analyze data through thematic coding, the texts were thoroughly read to become familiar with the data, the perceptions that came up frequently were given codes, themes were generated from the codes, names were given to the themes, and finally, the report was written.

## **The Participants**

At Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB), the students come from diverse regional, cultural, economic, educational, and religious backgrounds. Nevertheless, they are all mainstream Bangladeshis by birth, except for a few from different ethnic backgrounds. All of these students' English language learning situation is quite similar to that in Korea. Cho (2004) described the learning of English as an important issue in the Korean educational system. Korean students learn English from primary to high school. At university, English is taken as a required subject, and many schools require a certain level of English proficiency for graduation. Korean universities teach English for academic purposes. Likewise, students in Bangladesh complete 12 years of primary and secondary education, before they are admitted into the undergraduate programs. At the tertiary level, these students are required to take mandatory English language courses for academic purposes. All these students start learning English from Grade 1 and continue through Grade 12. English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), and students are exposed to all four skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking). They mandatorily sit for a 200-mark English examination and need to get a passing mark in order to graduate from Grade 12. At the tertiary level, courses in English for academic purposes are required.

## **The Institution**

At NDUB, each academic year consists of three trimesters. Each trimester runs for four months with two examinations conducted in each trimester (i.e., a midterm and final). There is a total of 24 classes for every course. The midterm examination takes place after the completion of 12 classes, and the final examination after the remaining 12. In 2020, the spring trimester began in January. The midterm examinations were taken in the second week of February. After the midterms, classes were running in full swing in order for the final examinations to be held in the second week of April. However, the classes had to be suspended from March 17, 2020, when NDUB still had three weeks of classes to complete. An urgent meeting was called by the NDUB authorities at which teachers were instructed to complete the remaining classes on whatever online platform they found suitable. This was despite the fact that a majority of the teachers neither had conducted online classes before nor had any training to integrate technology into the curriculum. In addition, there were other barriers to online teaching. Yet, the job had to be done. So, after a discussion among colleagues, it was suggested that teachers would use either email, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, or whatever was found comfortable to use.

## **Course Taught**

I taught the course Advanced Reading and Writing to 30 students. This course is a prerequisite for the students before they choose literature or linguistics as a major. The syllabus has two components: reading and writing. The reading part contains the teaching of various techniques such as skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading, and bottom-up and top-down approaches of reading. All these parts were completed before the midterm examination. For the final examination, I was teaching the writing component, which included writing paragraphs, essays, newspaper reports, business reports, formal and informal letters, and memorandums. After the midterm, I could only finish teaching paragraph and essay writing.

I chose Zoom to conduct my classes and Google Classroom to upload the materials I taught and for the students to submit quizzes, assignments, and examination scripts. In the classroom, I usually use

books and photocopies from various sources, which I left at my office as I did not anticipate the university would remain closed for a long time. We only had three weeks to complete the rest of the syllabus. Due to the shortage of time, it was not possible to teach all the topics. So, I curtailed the syllabus and taught formal and informal letters and memoranda. I searched Google for materials and found good samples of formal and informal letters and memoranda, which I downloaded and then uploaded one sample of each for the students. I arranged eight classes altogether to teach. In the first class, I started with the letters. I focused on the syntactic structure and semantic aspects of two forms of letters. I explained how the two letters contain different salutations, subjects, opening and closing sentences, and endings. For homework, I asked the students to look for samples of different kinds of formal and informal letters and upload them. This gave them exposure to language used in letters written for various reasons.

The Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981, cited in Brown, 2000) recommends exposing learners to language that is beyond their current competence level. In the next four classes, we picked different samples of letters that the students had uploaded and discussed them in detail. Finally, the students were asked to look for a job advertisement in a newspaper, write an application addressing the job, and upload it to Google Classroom. In the next two classes, I taught memoranda in a similar way, explaining how they are different from a letter. The last class was for review and clarification of items that students may not have been clear on. It often happens that students who initially feel shy talk about their confusion in the review classes. Towards the end of a course, students become more aware of the examination they have to take and their performance in order to achieve higher grades. This could be the result of extrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1990, cited in Brown & Lee, 2015) to perform better for extra marks. This was also observed in the case of online teaching. The students who communicated less in the beginning responded more towards the end of the course. This is also evident in Korean students learning English. As Park (1999) mentioned, Korean students' motivation is dominantly test oriented. They do not want to spend extra time on something if it does not potentially involve a higher score.

I faced various challenges in teaching online. There was no fixed schedule for me. It varied on different days. One day it was in the morning, another day it was at night around 8 or 9 p.m., as I would

get various requests, such as “We have only one device at home, which my brother will be using in the morning,” or “Can you please shift the class to the evening, there is an electricity problem in my area, it will not come back before the evening,” or “I can’t join the class now, as there is no internet network in my area, can you please shift the time of the class?” In order to keep my students motivated to attend classes, I had to cater to their requests as much as I could and be available from morning to night. A few students did not have any device. So, I requested that they borrow one from someone who could lend them one. One of the students told me “I borrowed my cousin’s smart phone for one and a half hours [the usual class duration], but you taught us for three hours. My cousin was very angry. I don’t think she will lend me the phone again.” Then onwards, I finished my classes within the one-and-a-half-hour timeframe.

In every class, even if all the students could join the Zoom meeting, in the middle, a few of them would be disconnected due to electricity or internet problems. Later, they would call me and express their frustration in not being able to understand the topic that I was teaching. So, later on I decided to record my lectures and upload them on Google Classroom so that the students could listen to them at their convenience.

Another problem was the time duration on Zoom. We had to take the opportunity of using the free version of Zoom, and the maximum free time that we could get was 40 minutes. In each class, I would start reviewing what I did in the previous class, the students would clarify their confusion, which would take about 10–15 minutes. In the remaining time, it was not possible to finish the topic to be taught. So, if all the students agreed, I would keep joining the recurring meeting on Zoom to get as many 40-minute sessions as I needed to finish the lesson. Out of the thirty students that I was teaching, four students could not attend the online classes and take the final examination, as they had to leave their hostel for fear of spreading the infection and go to their homes in remote villages, where they neither had access to a device nor the internet. After I submitted the results of the final examination in mid-June. These students came back to their hostel in the last week of June 2020, as they had access to computers and the internet in their hostel and contacted me regarding taking the examination. Even though it was two weeks after submitting the final grades for the course, I allowed them to take the examination and submitted their grades after discussing it with the examination office.

Learning takes place successfully when self-esteem is enhanced. The learner's "situational or specific" self-esteem may be hindered in "certain life situations" (Brown, 2000). These students' life situation because of the pandemic forced them to go back to their home villages. Not having access to online classes was very disappointing; depriving them from taking the examination would have meant the loss of a trimester, which would have been a cause for more disappointment and mental trauma. In order for them to continue in the learning process, I allowed them to take the examination, even after the final examination dates had passed, so that they could move on to the next trimester.

## **Assessment**

Assessment became a huge concern for everyone. After the remaining syllabus was completed, it was time for the final examination. Fifty percent of the assessment was done after the midterm examination. The final examination counted as 40 marks, which were usually comprised of written tasks, and the remaining 10 marks were for one assignment (worth 5 marks) and one presentation (worth 5 marks). I assigned the topics for the assignment and presentation, both of which were submitted on Google Classroom, for which I allowed one week, considering various potential problems such as power and internet disruption.

Regarding the possible 40 marks for written tasks, a lengthy meeting with the faculty members and the deputy registrar was held, and it was decided that the written test would carry 20 marks and an interview for each student would be conducted for the other 20 marks. It was a concern for everyone that if students were given only a written test, then there would be a very high chance of plagiarism. In the interview, the teachers would at least get to find out whether the students actually studied the prescribed topics. We were also instructed to construct the questions in such a way that the students would have less of an opportunity to plagiarize. After the dates for final examinations were set, the question was posted on Google Classroom, and the students were given 48 hours to complete and return their written answers. I allotted 48 hours to submit the written answers because of the anticipated disruption in the power supply, problems with internet connectivity, problems in accessing the device, and the students' mental trauma, as many of their family members had tested positive for COVID-19.

After the written examination, I fixed a time for the interview on Zoom. In the middle of the interview, we would get disconnected due to a power failure or internet issues. I collected the phone numbers of all the students prior to the interview. As soon as there were internet/power disruptions, I would call them on their phones. Even on the phone, we would sometimes be disconnected due to network problems. One of the students reported, “Inside my house, I don’t get any network. I have to go outside in the open place to talk to you.” So, I told them I would be available throughout the day; they could give me a call or leave a message on my phone, and I would call them back. Sometimes an interview scheduled for 15 minutes would take a few hours or two days to be completed because of these interruptions.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In order to understand whether there was a significant change in students’ performance on the final examination, the two sets of results (i.e., midterm and final exam) were compared.

### Interpretation of the Students’ Results

A paired *t* test was conducted to understand the significance of the difference between the two variables. It has already been mentioned that the two variables are from the same group and separated by time.

**TABLE 1. Paired Samples Statistics**

Pair 1	Mean	<i>N</i>	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Midterm	50.40	30	14.063	2.568
Final Exam	58.63	30	17.347	3.167

**TABLE 2. Paired Samples Correlations**

Pair 1	<i>N</i>	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Sig.
Midterm & Final Exam	30	.361	.050

**TABLE 3. Paired Samples Test**

Pair 1	Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i> -value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Midterm & Final Exam	-8.233	17.957	3.279	-14.939	-1.528	-2.511	29	.018

The results of the paired *t* test in Table 1 show that the mean score on the midterm examination was 50.40, and the mean score on the final examination was 58.63. This illustrates that the results of the final examination were comparatively better than those of the midterm examination. Table 1 also shows that the standard deviation of the midterm examination was 14.063, and the standard deviation of the final examination was 17.347. This indicates that the students who took the examinations were of mixed ability. The standard deviation of the final examination was higher than that of the midterm examination, which is an indication that the impact of the online classes was mixed. Table 2 shows the correlation between the two variables. The correlation is represented by the symbol *r*. Here, the correlation is  $r = 0.361$ , which demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between the variables. For the students who did better in the midterm examination, their performance on the final examination was also better.

Table 3 shows the significance of the difference between the variables. We know that if the *p*-value or the significance level is less than .05, it is significant. In Table 1, we see that the *p*-value is .018, which is less than .05. We therefore may conclude that the relation between the two variables is significantly different.

The students in this study never attended online classes before the pandemic. Therefore, it could be mentioned that since there is a positive correlation between the two variables, the impact of online teaching on these students was positive.

### **Interpretations of Teachers’ Opinions in the Interview**

The following summary of the interviews with ten teachers highlights their most frequent perceptions.

## **Assessment of the Students' Learning**

As there is no way to monitor the students while they are taking tests, quizzes, or examinations online, assessment has become a major concern of the teachers. "When students work on their own away from the classroom, it is not always clear that the work reflects their own efforts or whether they have been helped by others" (Harmer, 2007, p. 381). Teachers therefore think that instead of only going for "summative assessment" (Harmer, 2007, p. 379), they may also take up ongoing "formative assessment" (Harmer, 2007, p. 379), which would help them understand that the students are actually learning.

## **Extended Time of Availability**

The teachers' availability to the students' needs to be increased. One of the teachers said, "We have to remember that we are not teaching students in a fixed period of time. Now we don't need time to reach the office on time, and there is no rush to come back home. We are teaching from home, so our available hours for the students could be extended." One of the characteristics of an effective teacher is the "readiness to go extra miles for the students" (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 547). The majority suggested using online apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Facebook, Viber, or using email, the phone, or whatever means the students find suitable to maximize their reach with the teachers at their convenient time.

## **Flexibility of Submission Dates**

During regular times, teachers are very rigid about deadlines regarding the submission of students' work. However, during this critical time, teachers need to keep in mind that students are having various problems such as power failure, disruption of the internet, and inaccessibility to a device. Therefore, the teachers suggested a flexible submission time. A time period (2, 4, or 7 days) depending on the volume of the work is suggested so that students can submit according to their convenience. According to Brown and Lee (2015), teachers need to be flexible when things go awry.

## **Making Analytical Questions**

The sudden shift of teaching activities to the online platform did not give enough time to the teachers to make sufficient changes to the

question patterns. So, they were not satisfied with the questions they had made for the final examinations that took place in June 2020 during the pandemic. Most of these teachers thought that since there was no way to make certain that the students were not copying answers from various sources, one of the ways to prevent this was to design the questions in such a way that students could not produce answers copied from books or other sources and at the same time the “validity and reliability” (Harmer, 2007, p. 381) of the tests would be ensured. The teachers thought that the written answers of the students needed to be more thoughtful and creative and provide more in-depth analysis.

### **Frequent Meetings of Teachers**

All the teachers should meet frequently on Zoom or other available apps to share what they are doing to teach, including what went well and wrong. Active and questioning professionals are able to make generalizations and inferences on the basis of their own practice (McDonough & Shaw, 2012). It is also believed that successful teachers “cooperate harmoniously and candidly with colleagues, including seeing opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and techniques” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 547). These teachers were also of the opinion that they need to exchange ideas, which may be of mutual benefit, and then, the goal of creating a successful online teaching environment may become a concerted effort.

### **Bringing the Best Out of the Worst**

According to Brown and Lee (2015), teaching becomes effective when teachers have the willingness to take pedagogical risks in the classroom. These teachers thought that since the current situation was not in their control, it was of no use complaining about the lack of resources. Rather, they should make maximum use of whatever resources they have and try their best to provide the maximum to the students in this worst of situations. This is an indication that teachers are ready to take risks to give their best.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study aimed at exploring the roles of teachers in the new

environment of online teaching and learning and observing the students' performance after they were taught online. When it comes to integrating technology into the curriculum, teachers need to get rid of their fear and anxiety and enhance their skills and interest. This includes becoming partners in the learning process. The findings of the interviews were in line with these new roles of teachers. According to Brown and Lee (2015), one of the most refreshing aspects of teaching is that teachers never stop learning. They continuously try out new techniques and see how a student processes language, how classroom interaction can be enhanced, how the students' competence can be assessed, how emotions add to learning, or how their teaching style affects learners. These teachers are ready to accommodate the change by being flexible and available, offering ongoing assessments, collaborating with other teachers in order to learn new techniques for teaching, and taking risks to bring out the best in the crisis that has emerged.

Several studies in the Korean context also suggest collaborative learning and teamwork. Kim et al. (2019) recommend using the online app Moodle in order to enhance interactivity among members and increase their creative collaboration capabilities. They also suggest that the outputs obtained after cooperative learning using the online learning system should be collected and used for performance evaluation and course evaluation at a later stage. Yi and Jang (2020) predicted the possibilities of English language teaching in South Korea amid the COVID-19 crisis, suggesting it is not possible at the moment to recognize the potential long-term impact of the pandemic and remote teaching and learning on students and teachers. However, if we continue to pursue quality instruction through collaborative pedagogies, we may be able to see some positive effects and new possibilities for English language teaching and learning for post-pandemic education. In line with others, Chang (2020) also advocates for the establishment of an online teacher network by universities in Korea, as she believes an online teacher network within an institution would generate more immediate applicable collective knowledge.

Even though the students had many complaints regarding the teaching and learning situation on the online platform, the findings from their results indicate that there was a positive impact of online classes, as the final examination results show a significant change. These results also show that the students were a mixed ability group. In a mixed ability class, students have different strengths and weaknesses and

develop at different rates. They have different preferences for learning and displaying their work. A mixed ability class does not just consist of a range of abilities, but also a range of learning styles and preferences. All pupils will show strengths at different times depending on the topic being studied and the learning style being used (Ireson & Hallam, 2001, cited in Bremner et al., 2008).

The students' mixed abilities may suggest that in the new environment of learning, students are using different learning styles and preferences to adopt to the changes. In a traditional setup, their learning is guided by the teacher and also influenced by their peers. However, in the new online setup, they are afforded fewer opportunities to interact with their teachers and peers. Therefore, they are relying on their own learning styles and preferences, which may have brought forward their weaknesses and strengths. According to Brown (2000), the learning style combines both emotion and cognition and the learning styles depend on how they internalize the total environment. The new, online environment may have influenced the students' affective domain (Brown, 1994) in areas such as empathy, self-esteem, extroversion, inhibition, imitation, anxiety, and attitudes, which may have impacted their performance on the final examination.

The teachers' role in creating an appropriate environment for online learning is more important now than ever before. The environment is a concerning issue as supported by the studies done by Soni (2020) and Forrester (2020). Choi et al. (2021) mentioned that the lessons they learnt from their study on emergency remote teaching (ERT) during COVID-19 in Korea were that a teacher is someone who creates a learning environment wherein students are active participants and encouraged to collaborate and explore; a facilitator who helps students organize their off-line lives so that they focus on online learning; a person who supports the students' social and emotional development, particularly when learning is occurring in an online environment in which students may feel social isolation; and a person who helps students focus on learning rather than delivering knowledge in online schooling.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Even though in the context of Bangladesh, integrating technology in

teaching and learning is an enormous challenge. COVID-19 has made everyone in the field determined to tackle the situation. Everyone is trying their best to find ways to integrate technology into teaching. To make the online learning environment more effective, teachers are ready to adopt new techniques and methods so that there can be a more positive impact on student performance.

However, it is too early to state that these teachers' endeavors to adapt to the shift to online teaching and students' results will always bring positive outcomes. In this unique situation, when maintaining physical distancing has become important to stop the virus from spreading, it is also important to continue teaching and learning activities. It is therefore an opportunity for those in the field to understand how education can be made more effective through an online platform.

Nevertheless, the crisis is not faced by Bangladesh alone. It is a global crisis and needs a combined effort to find ways to make online teaching and learning more relevant and attractive to students of all backgrounds. The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 did not allow enough time to make an effective change to online teaching, but after almost one and a half years of adopting the online platform, we have identified its shortcomings. Therefore, educators, policymakers, and learners all over the world need to focus on these shortcomings and develop ways to more effectively integrate technology into the learning process.

Soni (2020) mentions that in order to carry forward the education system during the pandemic, different countries around the world have used TV broadcasts, online libraries, resources, guidelines, online channels, and video lectures as alternative means to traditional classroom learning. To compare the online real-time and on-demand content lectures in South Korea, Nam (2020) quoted from several studies on English writing teaching and assessment. One of the studies compared two groups and found that the experimental group, which received online information and opinion exchanges, showed significant gains in English writing over the comparison group, which was a self-directed class with online help only. Another study proposed an online English writing assessment method using an AI chatbot called Mitsuku, which was found to be an effective integration into the online assessment (Kim, 2020; Lee & Shin, 2020, cited in Nam, 2020).

Bailey and Lee (2020) suggest teachers may consider blended learning activities in regular classrooms, as this may help the transition

from a physical setup to an online platform in a similar future crisis. This will also develop the teachers' online teaching strategies over time. According to Yi and Jang (2020), teachers, students, parents, and administrators have been challenged by the shift from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning, which has reinstated opportunities to strengthen our experience, interest, and knowledge as resources. Choi et al. (2021) believe that the COVID-19 crisis has shown us that it is important for the government to restructure education to be based on technology, including the classroom setting, curriculum, methods of teaching and learning, and the evaluation system. They also suggest implementing a new approach to using technology for education with ICT at the center.

The crisis has not only affected education, it has also made an impact on our mental health and lifestyle. From observing the changes in the lifestyles, mental health, and quality of life of South Korean adults before and after the pandemic, Park et al. (2021) have come to the conclusion that policymakers and practitioners need to develop health education or make relevant interventions to deal with the current pandemic situation as well as future crises. Chang et al. (2020) also state that flexible and sustainable strategies are required to face similar situations in the future as the pandemic has had a significant impact on orthopedic resident education in South Korea. In Bangladesh, policymakers also may take a holistic approach to make education more meaningful and engaging.

Every unique situation looks for new opportunities. Harmer (2007) suggested that it is important for us to believe that when we adopt a new methodological procedure or a piece of classroom equipment, it has a future. We need to be confident that what we are investing time and money in is not a closed system and that it has potential for expansion and future growth. It is therefore crucial to take suggestions from all relevant sectors to develop a more congenial environment for teaching with the help of technology.

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# Effective EFL Teachers: Revealing Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

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This mixed-methods study aimed to identify the characteristics of effective teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL). To do so, the authors of this study considered one Chinese university and recruited three groups of participants: 32 EFL teachers, 26 teachers of other disciplines, and 110 students enrolled in an English foundation course. The authors' analysis of their quantitative data listed five perceived characteristics of effective EFL teachers: (a) professional competence, (b) love for the profession, (c) personality traits, (d) teaching-related traits, and (e) interpersonal skills. Interview data further described the subthemes of these five selected characteristics, which centered on the areas of knowledge, skills, attributes, and attitudes not only enriching students' learning but also determining their successes. These subthemes included, for example, linguistic skills, pedagogical knowledge and skills, commitment and devotion to teaching, knowledge of the target-language culture, and investment in creating good relationships with students and colleagues. These findings can be of use to EFL teacher educators as well as current and future EFL teachers. Based on these findings, better EFL training programs can be developed, and EFL teachers can better facilitate teaching and learning as well as adapt themselves to a new educational environment.

*Keywords:* effective EFL teachers, teachers' voices, students' voices, mixed-methods approach

## INTRODUCTION

In his seminal book, *Holler If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students*, Michie (1999) published an essay written by a Grade-7 student, Ruby Anaya, to her principal, Ms. Rhonda Hoskins,

identifying the characteristics of an effective and an ineffective teacher. The letter left on the desk of Ms. Hoskins stated,

If we want to improve ourselves, we must understand each other. I think teachers should try to make school fun. The kids should pay more attention and not to act dum, and not get into slot of trouble. Also, to do our homework every day. Teachers must also know how to control the kids but not get out of hand like trying to abuse the students. The children want to learn and they need some help to go in life.

If the teacher wants the children to learn he should help, not say that they are dum. If teachers lose their patience they should have it under control, not come out and say some wrong things and make the children feel bad. That's why the children act the way they act, not wanting to learn. I also hate it when the teacher criticizes a child or even some other teachers. There are some people that think they could say any dum things that they want and that we won't get mad.

I think that if we want to improve we need to get our minds together. Some teachers need to stop having a high temper and stop blaming the kids that it's their fault to get sick. And just because you get mad at one kid, don't go to another kid and start screaming at them. I would like to improve myself but there is some people that make me mad and makes me think that maybe it's not worth it. Some people say that we are not worth it and that we are nothing. That's what gets us mad. (p. 118)

A few years later, Michie (2019) revisited Ruby, who was then 17, living with her boyfriend and their two children, and asked her to describe what she thought a good teacher was. Ruby's understanding of a good teacher had not changed. A good teacher, she insisted, was passionate in their job and attentive and fair to their students. In her interview, she said,

Some teachers would tell us, "Hey, you can do something with your life," but I'm pretty sure that when they would come out of school, they would think. "She's a slow student, she's never gonna do anything." You could feel that they were lying to you, you know? They could look you in the eyes and say you can be somebody in life, because they didn't mean it. One of my teachers even compared us to his dogs. He would tell us that his dog could do something

what we couldn't do.

But there were some teachers who were different, like Mr. Z. He would look into your eyes and really talk to you. He didn't teach the high groups any different from the low groups. He treated us all the same. Plus, Mr. Z would listen to you. If a teacher doesn't listen, the kid's gonna think, "Why should I try to learn this?" Teachers should take the time with each student so they understand it. But some teachers don't really care.

I don't want to say that they're bad teachers. I guess they're trying their best. But the way I see it, they're just there to get paid. I think Mr. Z would teach school even if he didn't get paid. It's like his life. He loves teaching kids. He cares. And if you see the teacher cares, and listens to you, you try to repay him by listening and studying hard in his class. (p. 124)

Michie's (1999) interview with another one of his former students, Juan, demonstrated a similar description of a good teacher. A good teacher was, Juan reiterated, attentive to their students and flexible:

To me what makes a good teacher is someone who understands the students. If the teacher knows how the students are thinking, you can teach a class easily. I mean, if you see the kids are dead, common sense will tell you you better change your strategy, you know? If all these kids are looking at you like a bunch of zombies, common sense will tell you you're doing something wrong. (p. 144)

A former chancellor of the Washington, D.C. public schools (2007–2010), Michelle Rhee, contributed one chapter to the book *Waiting for Superman: How Can We Save American's Failing Public Schools* (Weber, 2010). In essence, Rhee's (2010) chapter stressed the vital impacts that a good teacher could have on their students. On one of her visits to one public school, she wrote,

Students are very serious about wanting to learn from the best. During an unannounced visit to one high school, I noticed many classrooms were nearly empty. I saw only one that was full, an English class in which the students were actually engaged in discussion. As I left the school one hour later, I noticed that three young men who had been in the English class were leaving as well.

"Where are you going?" I asked one.

“We came to school because the first period teacher is a good one,” he said. “The second isn’t, so we’re rollin.” (p. 133)

Correlations between the characteristics of effective teachers and students’ desires to learn have long interested researchers and educators (Wayne & Young, 2003). Over the years, such correlations have been extensively documented and reported. For example, numeric data employed in Young and Shaw (1999) listed five characteristics of an effective teacher; they were (a) having good subject matter knowledge, (b) self-confidence, (c) enjoyment for teaching, (d) good preparation for teaching, and (e) enthusiasm for teaching. More importantly, these researchers further stressed the correlations between an effective teacher and students’ learning performances. That is, an effective teacher raised students’ desires to learn and improved their performances. The qualitative findings of Walls et al. (2002) were parallel with those of Young and Shaw (1999). Their narrative data gathered from three different groups of participants – prospective teachers, novice teachers, and experienced teachers – identified a variety of traits an effective teacher should possess. They were, for example, care for students, creativity, good teaching techniques, and having up-to-date knowledge. Such traits could, Walls et al. concluded, enhance students’ learning outcomes. After 15 years of reading and analysis of students’ compositions regarding the characteristics of an effective teacher, along with listening to class discussions of what made a good teacher, Walker (2020) recently published a list of 12 traits of an effective teacher based on their recurring themes. These 12 traits were divided into two categories: (a) professional characteristics (good preparation for teaching, positiveness, high expectations, creativity, fairness) and (b) personal characteristics (approachability, ability to create a comfortable environment for learning, compassion, a sense of humor, respect of their students, forgivingness, and admitting mistakes).

Recent years have seen a flurry of interest among language education researchers in identifying the characteristics of an effective language teacher. Brosh’s (1996) mixed-methods study with 200 foreign language teachers and 406 ninth-grade high school students from 10 different high schools in the metropolitan Tel Aviv area created a list of six characteristics of an effective language teacher. The first three were commonly shared by both groups of participants: (a) a good command of the four basic language skills, (b) the ability to transmit knowledge,

and (c) the ability to motivate students. The fourth characteristic that the teacher participants deemed important was (d) the ability to provide students with experiences of success, whereas the next two characteristics selected by the students were (e) fairness and (f) availability after class time. Carmel and Badash's (2019) study focused on English language teachers in Israel. They requested 167 early-career English teachers to complete an online survey and interviewed six teachers. From their findings a list of characteristics of an effective English language teacher was constructed; this list included motivation, enthusiasm, self-confidence, teamwork, and sharing of teaching practices, to name only a few. Yilmaz (2018) interviewed 14 pre-service teachers enrolling in the practicum course in the Department of English at a Turkish university to identify characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. The study concluded with a list of these characteristics: (a) the ability to search for ongoing professional development, (b) good pedagogical knowledge, (c) good classroom management skills, and (d) focus on learner needs. Bremner (2020) developed a qualitative study with 13 students from a Mexican university that yielded similar findings as those of the previous studies: An effective English language teacher necessarily possessed good pedagogical knowledge and the ability to create good relationships with students. Li and Walsh (2011) asserted that good computer literacy was imperative for a good EFL teacher in China due to the popularity of technology in the country. Generally speaking, the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher are usually centered on attributes related to "knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards learners" (Borg, 2006, p. 7). Prevalently, these characteristics are, for example, creating interesting classes, good pronunciation, offering clear explanations, speaking good English, developing good relationships with students, patience, and being friendly and approachable (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Barnes & Lock, 2010; Bekereci, 2017; Bell, 2005; Carmel & Badash, 2017; Chen & Lin, 2009; Iman, 2020; Mahammaditabar et al., 2019; Metruk, 2020; Park & Lee, 2006; Richter & Herrera, 2017; Yazdanipour & Mehrnoush, 2020; Zamani & Ahangari, 2016). In conclusion, these mentioned characteristics of an effective English teacher not only create high expectations of EFL teachers but also generate an implication that EFL teachers necessarily excel in all aspects including "academic competence, subject knowledge, personal qualities, and morality" (Zhang & Watkins, 2007, p. 786).

Given the importance of the issue, the authors conducted this study

to explore the essential attributes that make effective EFL teachers. Taking Beishuizen et al.'s (2001) argument into account, this research examines and compares the perceptions of three different groups of participants on the issue. In doing so, mutual understanding among these three groups of participants may be reached and a more complete list of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers may be drawn as a result.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Two theoretical notions undergird the present study: teacher voice and student voice. Voice is a particular opinion or attitude expressed. In education, teacher voice is important as “it carries the tone, the language, the quality, feelings that are conveyed by the way a teacher speaks or writes.... It can represent both the unique individual and the collective voice, one that is characteristic of teachers as compared to other groups” (Butt et al., 1992, p. 57). Over the years, such importance has enticed educational researchers to immerse themselves into actual educational contexts to gather and document teachers’ voice. Though much of this research has allowed teachers’ voice to be heard, both loudly and articulately, this research oftentimes could be misleading. This is because neither teachers’ voices that differ or offend are included, nor are other voices that may be as important as those of teachers (Hargreaves, 1996). Taking Hargreaves’ criticisms into consideration, the authors have gone into one Chinese university and gathered EFL teachers’ voices together with voices of teachers of other disciplines to identify characteristics of an effective EFL teacher.

Heeding Hargreaves’ (1996) suggestions regarding the strengthening of teachers’ voices, the authors have also included students’ voices as another data source. This particular data source would help, as Hargreaves argued, situate a better understanding of what goes on in an actual classroom as well as a school community. Lincoln (1995) noted, “Children and adults combine power and create new forms of wisdom when they explore learning together” (p. 89). Mindful of this, the authors have followed the notions of students’ voices (Cook-Sather, 2006; Cook-Sather & Shultz, 2001) and collected students’ voices on traits of an effective EFL teacher. These voices were gathered within three different parameters central to work on students’ voices: rights, respect, and listening. Students are a part of teaching and learning, so they have

rights to voice their own thoughts. Most importantly, students need to be empowered so that they can elicit their voices regarding education. Respect is a dynamic relationship built among people in the same context. It helps teachers build a communicative and open relationship with students so that both teachers and students can trust each other and learn from one another. Listening allows teachers to get to know students better and treat students without prejudice. In consequence, teachers can build teaching themes that can be related more closely to students' lives.

The presence of three diverse voices (i.e., EFL teachers, teachers of other disciplines, and students) can possibly warrant a more complete list of traits of effective EFL teachers.

## **METHOD**

The authors followed notions of a mixed-methods research paradigm (Feilzer, 2010; Ghiara, 2020; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) and developed two distinctive data collection tools: a questionnaire and a one-to-one interview.

### **Instruments**

#### **Questionnaire**

To develop a questionnaire for this study, the authors considered and adapted the questionnaires of Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015), Brosh (1996), and Park and Lee (2006). The questionnaire was developed in both Chinese and English. Before being used, the questionnaire was piloted on a group of Chinese university students and a couple of EFL teachers and teachers of other disciplines in a Chinese university. With comments received after pilot testing, some items were added and some were removed from the questionnaire.

The final questionnaire was then administered to 168 research participants from one college of education at a university in China who consented to participate in the study (the participants consisted of 110 students undertaking EFL subjects, 32 EFL teachers, and 26 teachers of other disciplines). These participants were asked to choose five characteristics that they perceived important for an effective EFL teacher

and then rank these five traits in terms of importance (5 = *most important*, 4 = *very important*, 3 = *important*, 2 = *less important*, and 1 = *least important*).

### **One-to-One Interview**

One-to-one interviews consisted of semi-structured interviews and were designed to probe the responses to the questionnaire. More importantly, these interviews would allow for interaction between the authors and the participants, contributing to further expression and better clarification of meaning (Blaikie, 2000).

Interview questions were adapted from Borg (2006) and Yazdanipour and Mehrnoush (2020), and were tested on a group of people with the same traits as the potential research participants. Interview questions were then revised, reworded, and rearranged with comments received from the pilot interviews. Of the total, 12 interview questions were used. All interviews were conducted at the College of Education at the participants' university and were in Chinese. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes and was, with permission from the participants, audio-recorded for further transcription and analysis.

### **Participants**

Of the total, 168 participants from the College of Education at a Chinese university consented to participate in the study. They consisted of 32 EFL teachers, 26 teachers of other disciplines, and 110 students enrolling in EFL classes. The participants' university is a public provincial key university located in the northern part of China. It consists of 31 colleges and offers more than 90 undergraduate programs. The university employs more than 2,000 teachers and faculty staff and has more than 30,000 graduate students.

All the participants were ensured privacy and confidentiality. They were informed that their names would be replaced with pseudonyms (Eisner, 2017).

### **Data Analysis**

The results of the completed and returned questionnaires were entered into a computer and calculated with SPSS (version 25) to

identify frequencies among these responses. These frequencies were later arranged and grouped to list the top five characteristics of an effective EFL teacher perceived by the three different groups of participants. All interview transcripts were read and re-read and were arranged into categories and sub-categories with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) open and axial coding techniques. Later, these two data sets were compared and contrasted in terms of consistency, inconsistency, and contradiction (Mathison, 1988). In doing so, a more complete understanding of the traits of an effective EFL teacher could then emerge (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009).

## RESULTS

The frequency and mean distribution of the responses dealing with traits of effective EFL teachers indicated no differences in the perceptions that these three groups of participants held toward the issue. Their responses could be grouped into five main characteristics, namely (a) teaching-related traits, (b) personal traits, (c) interpersonal skills, (d) professional competence, and (e) love of the profession. All three groups of participants rated professional competence as the most important characteristic that an effective EFL teacher needed to have. Included within this characteristic were such things as having good teaching methods, preparing and organizing the lesson, motivating students, and making lessons interesting. The second important characteristic was love of the profession; it included, for example, having a passion for teaching and being dedicated to the profession. Personality traits (e.g., being patient, being approachable, being humorous, and being reliable) were rated as the third most important characteristic for effective EFL teachers. Ranked fourth were teaching-related traits such as being able to give students a sense of accomplishment, stimulating independent learners, being able to explain clearly, and creating a comfortable learning atmosphere. Rated as the least important of the five characteristics was interpersonal skills (e.g., getting to know students and exchanging ideas with other teachers). (See Table 1.)

**TABLE 1. Descriptive Data on Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers as Perceived by EFL Teachers, Teachers of Other Disciplines, and Students**

Characteristics	Frequency (%)		
	EFL Teachers	Teachers of Other Disciplines	Students
Professional competence	49.02	48.82	51.63
Love of the profession	18.63	17.65	16.89
Personality traits	13.56	12.58	12.73
Teaching-related traits	10.36	12.13	11.67
Interpersonal skills	9.43	8.82	7.08
Total	100	100	100

*Note.* *N* = 168.

Interview data further revealed and clarified the participants' perceptions of each of these five characteristics.

## Five Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers

### Professional Competence

All three groups of participants commonly perceived this characteristic as the most important for effective EFL teachers. Professional competence comprised two sub-themes: linguistic knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skills.

### *Linguistic Knowledge*

Essentially, effective EFL teachers, as commonly agreed by the majority of the participants, necessarily had a good command of the English language. An EFL teacher, Mei Wei (pseudonyms are used for all participants named in this study), explained that if EFL teachers had complete mastery of grammar and pronunciation, they could serve as a good language model for students. She noted,

Effective EFL teachers must have strong language skills; their English must be at a very high level. Their oral expressions should be very fluent and their pronunciation should be close to that of a native speaker of English. They can then teach correct English to

students as well as serve as a good model of how English should be used. These are the basic and necessary qualities.

Another EFL teacher, Laura, agreed and emphasized the necessity for effective EFL teachers to acquire strong language skills: “Good EFL teachers must have strong language skills. They must also have good pronunciation and be fluent in English.” Yang’s response reverberated those of Mei Wei and Laura: “Good, awesome, and native-like pronunciation is a must for English teachers.”

Three teachers of other disciplines agreed with Mei Wei and emphasized the necessity for effective EFL teachers to have strong linguistic knowledge. Hua once observed English language classes at the participants’ university and recognized the differences in the quality of teaching of the EFL teachers with stronger and weaker linguistic knowledge. Those with stronger linguistic knowledge could focus more on teaching whereas those with weaker linguistic knowledge could not, as they had to be more attentive to their own English. Hua shared this with the authors:

Pronunciation and grammar are very important, especially for speaking. And effective EFL teachers must master these. I once observed some EFL classes at the university and found that the teachers with no fluency in the English language often got stuck in their teaching. Many of these teachers could not really focus on their teaching, as they were worried about their English. Some gave a bad lecture, some spoke Chinese throughout, and some spoke Chinglish. Meanwhile, the teachers with stronger linguistic knowledge had no problem with their English; they could give 100% attention to the teaching.

Another teacher of another discipline, Jia, also mentioned the necessity for effective EFL teachers to have an American accent when speaking English. This would probably motivate students to learn English. Jia stated, “I think that if I were a student, I would enjoy listening to the EFL teachers with a standard American accent. I would feel like I were watching a movie.” Jia also insisted on the importance of linguistic knowledge, especially pronunciation: “I had two EFL teachers while I was studying for my graduate degree. These two teachers were able to attract me because of their good pronunciation.”

The majority of the student participants also mentioned that linguistic knowledge was most important for effective EFL teachers. For four students, strong knowledge of subject matter indicated the effectiveness of an EFL teacher. Ling opined, “Good EFL teachers should be good at what they teach. Only in this way can teachers clearly convey their knowledge to students.” Ge also stated, “College EFL teachers must at least have a solid basic knowledge of English.” Yue’s question stressed the importance of knowledge of subject matter; she asked, “If teachers don’t have enough knowledge of the subject matter, how can they teach students?” Ru shared with the authors her disappointment with her current EFL teacher. Ru stated that because of his inadequate knowledge of subject matter, he “oftentimes either mispronounces or misspells words. Frequently, he forgets things and gives us inaccurate information. We want a teacher with good knowledge of the subject matter.”

Another five students emphasized EFL teachers’ mastery of pronunciation, indicating that it was essential for effective EFL teachers to acquire native-like English pronunciation skills because they could then serve as a good model of an English language user for students. Guo was satisfied with her current EFL teacher because the teacher “had good pronunciation skills.” Le explained, “An English teacher needs to have either a native-like or a standard pronunciation. So, they can help students improve their speaking.” Bai agreed, noting that

Good English teachers must be especially good at pronunciation so that they can help students with their English pronunciation skills. You know how mispronunciation can be misleading and cause confusion. For example, the letter “a” can have different sounds, and this confuses students.

Zhang’s response was similar: “Good English teachers with good pronunciation skills cannot only impress students but can also model correct pronunciation for students.” Fang made a brief assertion emphasizing teachers’ mastery of pronunciation: “Teachers with good pronunciation can correct my pronunciation and help me improve my speaking skills.”

### ***Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills***

All three groups of participants further emphasized that effective

EFL teachers needed to have strong pedagogical knowledge and skills. Being aware of each individual student's differences, adapting teaching methods to meet students' needs, and creating attraction and enthusiasm were frequently mentioned in these participants' responses to the interview questions. Several of the EFL teacher participants commonly agreed that effective EFL teachers had to have strong pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills. Laura explained, "The main quality of good EFL teachers is their knowledge of teaching methods. Then, these teachers will know what methods and strategies can best be used to foster learning." Zhao reverberated, "If EFL teachers are equipped with a reservoir of pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills, they can then better respond to the diverse needs of students." Yang stated, "Talking about the important qualities of good EFL teachers, knowledge of language teaching methods, including teaching skills, comes to the top. This is extremely important. You cannot be an effective teacher if you don't know how to teach."

Three teachers of other disciplines mentioned that pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills were essential for effective EFL teachers, as they would allow teachers to deal with teaching more effectively. Niu explained, "Students are different. Some might have a strong interest in English; some might not. The teachers who know how to teach can then figure out the way to make lessons interesting to everyone." In short, Liang noted, "Only the teachers with broad pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills can affect and attract students." Jiang's response was similar; he replied,

In my opinion, the way teachers carry out their teaching can greatly affect students. If an EFL teacher does only word-for-word translation or just lectures, students will lose interest. They probably listen in for the first few minutes and then turn to their mobiles. Good EFL teachers most certainly need to know how to teach. Only then can they capture students' interest.

More than half of the student participants expected effective EFL teachers to have a high degree of pedagogical knowledge and strong teaching skills. Kang responded, "Good EFL teachers must not only have language skills; they must also know how to teach." Guo replied, "I like the teacher who moves around and tries different things rather than just sitting and reading things aloud to us." Interview responses from four

other students buttressed the essential need for pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills. Jing shared with the authors that good pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills contribute to effective teaching, which contributes greatly to better student performance: “Effective EFL teachers need to know different ways of teaching so they can use these so-called teaching strategies and techniques to not only encourage students to learn but also to bring out the best from their students.”

### **Love of the Profession**

The second stated characteristic for effective EFL teachers was love for teaching. All the participants related a teacher’s passion for teaching to student success in learning. That is, the more the teachers loved their job, the more they would dedicate themselves to the job; and this would contribute to students’ achievement. One EFL teacher, Zhu, commented,

Good EFL teachers should love their job; they need to love to teach. The more passion they have of teaching, the more seriously they will, I believe, be responsible to their job by giving themselves to the job. This, I believe, encourages students to try harder and become successful in their learning.

Another EFL teacher, Xiaomi, had an opinion similar to that of Zhu saying, “Teachers who love teaching can endure whatever defies them. EFL teaching, in particular, is very demanding. However, good EFL teachers must be well-prepared and keep challenging students.”

Comments of both teachers of other disciplines and students ran in parallel with those of the EFL teacher participants. Likewise, both groups observed that effective EFL teachers needed to be passionate about teaching. The more passion they had for teaching, the more attentive to the job they would be, and the more success in learning students would have. One teacher of another discipline, Xie, explained,

I think it is very important for effective EFL teachers to love teaching. I believe that the more love that teachers have of their teaching, the more outgoing and active the teachers will be in their classrooms. With this, the teachers can not only create an active atmosphere in their English classrooms but also inspire students to work hard and become successful.

Hua's statement was in agreement: "EFL teachers with enthusiasm commit to the job and devote themselves to teaching. These teachers can easily grasp their students' attention and inspire them to try harder in learning the language."

Interview responses from five students further strengthened the association between teachers' love of teaching and students' success in learning. The following are their direct quotations:

EFL teachers should be energetic and dedicated to teaching. [Fan]

Effective EFL teachers definitely need to love teaching. Only when teachers are passionate about teaching are they able to both inspire and motivate students to learn. [Guo]

My current EFL teacher is good. She loves to teach; she is very devoted and responsible. One time she got a cold but she still came to class and taught. Most of the students in my class respect her a lot; we have all tried very hard in her class. [Huang]

My EFL teacher is really dedicated and devoted to teaching. She teaches me a lot. [Jing]

Effective EFL teachers should not just teach to get the job done. They need to be committed and devoted not only to their job but also to their students. Then, students can also commit themselves to learning as well as to their own improvement. [Fang-Chung]

### **Personality Traits**

Interview data listed teacher personality traits as the third most important characteristic of effective EFL teachers. These personality traits included, for example, being responsible, creative, encouraging, supportive, resourceful, approachable, patient, and having a sense of humor, to name a few. More importantly, such personalities in several ways contributed to students' success in English language learning.

Of all the personal traits, the three most frequently mentioned among these participants were being responsible, being creative, and being encouraging and supportive. For Zhu, an EFL teacher, good EFL teachers are characterized as follows:

For me, good EFL teachers must have responsibility and creative

minds. Also they need to be encouraging and supportive. Several aspects of language teaching demand responsibility from teachers; these include, for example, lesson preparation, selection of classroom activities, and design and development of supplementary materials. Good EFL teachers need to be creative also. When can they bring in activities? What language activities can be used to promote learning? Furthermore, I think EFL teachers have to know how to encourage and support their students. This is because most students, I am sure, love English teachers who constantly urge and push students to speak up in English, offer students assistance, and give students valuable advice, especially on how to improve their English. Teachers with these personalities are able to help students become more successful in their learning.

With regard to these three personality traits, another EFL teacher, Yang, mentioned the following:

Importantly, good English teachers must be seriously responsible in relation to both their jobs and their students. They also need to think constantly about how they can get their students to speak English, how they can encourage their students to speak up and participate in classroom activities, and how they can provide both help and support to their students. These things will help students reduce their anxiety and become less fearful when having to speak English with a native speaker.

Wang Ping's response not only reiterated those of Zhu and Yang but also further highlighted the importance of creativity. She stated, "As important as being responsible is being creative. Good EFL teachers need to be creative so that they can create activities that can not only enliven the classroom but also challenge students to practice their English language."

When asked to identify the crucial personalities for effective EFL teachers, most of the teachers of other disciplines suggested the following personalities as essential: being encouraging, being supportive, being resourceful, and being approachable. Niu related,

I think good English teachers need to possess these traits: being encouraging and supportive. Students love English teachers who constantly urge students to speak up in English, provide students

with help, and give students valuable advice and guidance, especially on how to improve their English. Apart from this, it is very important for English teachers to be approachable. Then students will not be afraid to come to the teacher to ask for help.

Jia's response was similar to other teacher participants but laid more emphasis on two personality traits: being resourceful and being approachable. She explained,

I agree that those personal attributes are important. But based on my experience of over ten years, I would say that it is very important for good English teachers to be resourceful. They should be able to guide students on how to improve their English – like what books to read, what to do to improve their English speaking, or how to improve their English writing. Also, they need to be, I would say, friendly enough so that students feel okay to contact them.

In contrast with the two groups of teacher participants, the students' frequently mentioned that the personalities of effective EFL teachers revolved around affective personalities such as having a sense of humor, being open-minded, patient, and approachable. Bai explained that such personalities can create a bond between teachers and students: "Students like teachers who are kind, gentle, funny, and patient. These traits make students feel that these teachers are approachable – that they are easy to talk with." Ru liked her current English teacher because she was "kind, friendly, and patient. She is never tired of answering our questions, and she patiently explains things to us." Responses of five of the student participants (Ching Lai, Le, Wei Ling, Yan, and Yue) drew a connection between English teachers' sense of humor/open-mindedness and teacher–student interaction. These two traits, as they explained, made students feel that it is easier to approach teachers and interact with them. Wei Ling stated,

Good English teachers should have a sense of humor and be open-minded. This, however, doesn't mean that teachers should not be strict and let students do whatever they want. Of course, teachers must be strict with student performance. For example, teachers must be serious if students don't finish their homework. Nonetheless, teachers should not be that strict while teaching. Telling a joke or a story would help relax students and make the classroom livelier.

More importantly, teachers should be open-minded and welcome different opinions and answers. This would, I think, encourage students to interact more with their teachers.

Focusing particularly on approachability and friendliness, Yuan conveyed,

My college EFL teachers are different from my high school EFL teachers in a good way. Most of my college EFL teachers are approachable and friendly. They make me feel that we are friends. They interact with students in class and outside of the classroom. My current English teacher often stops me in the hallway, and we have a short conversation. If I have any problem, I can call her up or stop by her office and we talk.

### **Teaching-Related Traits**

More than half of the participants associated several characteristics concerning teaching-related traits with effective EFL teachers. These characteristics were, for example, knowledge of the culture of the target language, good subject matter knowledge, and an ability to hold English-only classes. One of the student participants, Lou, explained:

My current English teacher is good. I like it when she shares with us her experiences with English culture while she was studying in England. It is new knowledge for me, as I never heard this before in my English classes. Better yet, she often links the content in the textbook with things outside of the classroom. This is good. We haven't had much chance to experience life outside of the classroom until now.

Su explained how EFL teachers' intimate knowledge of, for example, cultures of English-speaking countries could interest and motivate students to be more attentive to English lessons. Zu's current EFL teacher exemplified such a trait:

My English teacher knows lots of things. She is able to share with us more than just the content in the textbook. She tells us lots of things about other countries to gain our attention. We are interested in those fun facts about, for example, what happens in other countries, how people in different cultures think about things, or how

they live in other countries.

Le also said, “I like my present English teacher. He has broad subject matter knowledge and an international perspective. He always connects his international cultural knowledge with the content in the textbook. We all listen to him attentively.”

Several EFL teachers and teachers of other disciplines also concurred and rated cultural knowledge as another imperative for effective EFL teachers. Many of these teachers agreed that EFL teachers’ discussion of cultures of English-speaking countries in the classroom was necessary, as it would help motivate students as well as enhance their language proficiencies. Yang mentioned the following:

If English teachers have good knowledge of, for example, cultures of English-speaking people, the teachers will be able to challenge students to question the content and form their own understanding. This, for me as an EFL teacher, is very important because it not only develops students’ understandings of English but also enriches their communication skills.

Another EFL teacher, Zhao, also stated that EFL teachers’ knowledge of cultures and subject matter effectively enhances students’ English communication skills. This was, Zhao said, because students may become more confident when speaking English with a so-called native speaker of English. Zhou related,

Chinese students have a good foundation of English knowledge. However, when they have to use English in real life, many of them can’t. They become stuck; they can neither speak nor understand English. To me, good English teachers need to teach more than only grammar and vocabulary. They must share with their students information about the cultures of English-speaking countries – things like what to do and what not to do. If our students don’t know about these things, they will feel awkward, as they have no clue about what to do in these foreign situations.

A couple of teachers of other disciplines criticized English teachers’ sole focus on language structure and grammatical components as not being able to accommodate students’ present needs of English. Necessarily, effective English teachers bring in other types of knowledge

such as culture of the English-speaking countries. Moreover, these teachers also emphasized the necessity for effective English teachers to conduct their teaching in English only. Jia explained,

Language is a kind of culture, and it changes with time. Therefore, I think students need to learn more than just language structure per se. Many Chinese students can get a high score on their English tests but don't know how to produce an English sentence. Our students in general don't have experience; they don't know much of what happens outside China. So it would be good for our students to learn about New Zealand or Australian culture. Then they would know how English is used in everyday life. Better yet, it would be even better if students could learn all about this only in English. That's another quality of good English teachers. They need to be able to use English-only in the classroom. This is really important, especially for our Chinese students as the English classroom is the only place where they can hear English. Outside of the classroom, everything is in Chinese.

Niu echoed Jia in relating that English teachers should conduct English-only classes to master linguistic skills. He emphasized, "They have to be able to hold class in English; they must tell students about the culture of English-speaking countries. They definitely must not only follow a textbook."

### **Interpersonal Skills**

The last characteristic deemed essential for effective EFL teachers dealt with the quality of interpersonal skills. This characteristic was divided into two subthemes: teacher-student relationships and teacher-teacher relationships.

About one third of the participants commented that good English teachers are necessarily invested in developing good relationships with their students, as they could contribute to students' success in learning. One of the students, Ru, asserted,

Communication and the relationship with students are important for English teachers. A teacher should move around the classroom sometimes or maybe after class and talk with students. One of my past English teachers often talked to students after class to check if they had any problems with their studies or their life. He helped us

a lot with our studies, giving us some useful language tips. My English very much improved.

Another student, Ling, added that teachers' relationships with students can shape students' attitudes toward English: "English teachers' relationships with their students can, I think, make students like English more." The same participant went further to explain how teachers can build such relationships: "Be friendly with students by talking with students and not trying to maintain a superior teacher status." A couple of EFL teachers concurred and emphasized this particular quality of effective EFL teachers. Zhao asserted,

It is important, I believe, for good English teachers to establish a good relationship with students – making an effort in getting to know students, to learn their names, to check with them from time to time on their learning, and socializing with them outside of the classroom. These things will help improve students' attitudes toward English. If their attitude toward English is better, they will try harder, and their performance will certainly improve.

Yang's response regurgitated and reemphasized the contribution of teacher–student relationships to the changing of students' attitudes and the betterment of students' performances. These three were in fact interconnected; that is, effective interpersonal relationships can transform students' attitudes toward English, which in turn, can lead to students' improvement of their performance. Yang stated,

I think it is superb if English teachers can really get along well with their students. Good relationships can be valuable in various ways. Importantly, they can make students like the language, and the students will try a bit harder to learn the language. Make a lot of contacts with students, learn their names, get to know them, be attentive to your students, and pay attention to them. I believe these are the qualities that English teachers need to have besides just teaching. I also believe that these qualities in English teachers will change students' attitudes toward English. The students might learn to like the subject more, they might try more, and eventually they will be able to improve their English.

A teacher of another discipline, Kuai Fei, contended that having

good relationships with both colleagues and students was imperative for good English teachers. These two types of relationships were considered reciprocal. Good relationships with colleagues in particular would initiate interaction that could lead to collaboration, which would eventually foster professional development within teachers. With more professional development, teachers could improve their teaching, which in turn, could enhance student performance. Kuai Fei stated,

Having good contacts is necessary for good English teachers. This is because if teachers work together, they can share ideas about teaching and help each other plan activities or games for their students. So I think it is very important for English teachers to create good relationships with one another. This can greatly affect their teaching. English classes can become more interesting and attractive, especially for students. I don't think students enjoy a class that is just a lecture or a class that is just reading. If students become more motivated, they will try harder and their English can then improve.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Overall, the study reported in this paper took place in China. It identifies characteristics of effective EFL teachers as perceived by EFL university teachers, university teachers of other disciplines, and university students. Five major characteristics emerge from the authors' analyses of the participants' completed questionnaires and interview responses; these characteristics are (a) professional competence, (b) love of the profession, (c) personality traits, (d) teaching-related traits, and (e) interpersonal skills. In addition, the analyzed interview data allowed the authors to offer better insights into each salient characteristic.

It was found that professional competence is imperative for effective EFL teachers. They necessarily possess both linguistic knowledge (pronunciation and good language skills) and pedagogical knowledge and skills (a variety of language teaching methodologies). Effective EFL teachers need to love their profession and be dedicated to their job, as this can contribute to students' success in learning. Students' successes are as well attributed to teachers' personality and teaching-related traits. Effective English teachers should be creative, responsible, approachable, patient, and friendly, to name a few of the characteristics mentioned by

the participants. In addition, they must have knowledge of the culture of the target language, good subject matter knowledge, and the ability to conduct English-only classes. Also imperative are interpersonal skills. Effective EFL teachers essentially develop and possess good relationships with both students and colleagues. Such good relationships can also enhance students' English language proficiencies.

To some extent, the findings of this study are in parallel with previous research in this particular area (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Banno, 2003; Borg, 2006; Brosh, 1996). That is, most of the characteristics chosen by these three groups of participants contain notions related to the areas of knowledge and attitudes that not only enrich students' learning but also contribute to students' success in learning. Nonetheless, these findings are also in stark contrast with a couple of studies on the same issue.

While Bremner's (2020) findings note that neither language knowledge nor proficiency is regarded as an important characteristic for effective EFL teachers to have, these two characteristics are mentioned as the most essential in the present study. Such held views and expectations closely correlated with Chinese traditional educational beliefs that have long influenced the country's education. Not only do these beliefs exalt teachers but they also raise high expectations from them. That is, teachers need to have profound knowledge; they then can pass it on to students, help shape them, and make them good persons (Gao & Watkins, 2001; Ho, 1991; Liu, 1973; Watkins & Zhang, 2006; Zhang & Watkins, 2007). Interestingly, these findings are also in line with Park and Lee's (2006) research whose quantitative findings listed English proficiency and pedagogical knowledge as significant attributes for effective EFL teaching.

Yazdanipour and Mehrnoush's (2020) findings gathered from 27 administrators from English language institutes in Iran list teachers' appearance (e.g., countenance, clothing, and physique) as one of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers. This characteristic, however, was not mentioned by any of the participants in this study. This contrast might be explained by the differences in the research participants. Yazdanipour and Mehrnoush's participants were all administrators of private language institutes, and they might regard English teachers as marketers that could attract students and their parents. More students also mean higher income and more financial stability for an institute. These factors may not be regarded as important by the participants of the

present study who are teachers and students in a public university.

In general, the Yazdanipour and Mehrnoush (2020) study illustrates not only the characteristics attributed to effective EFL teaching that are universal, but it also highlights differences in the ranking of these characteristics. Characteristics of effective EFL teachers are either gender-specific, group-specific, or context-specific. Findings from earlier research in Korea, for example, reinforce such a notion. Park and Lee's (2006) statistical data calculated from 169 EFL high school teachers and 339 high school students demonstrated differences in degree of importance of the perceived characteristics of effective EFL teachers. While the teacher participants rated pedagogical knowledge as being more important than English language proficiency for effective EFL teaching, the student participants placed English language proficiency higher than pedagogical knowledge. Both agreed, however, that socio-affective skills were the least important. Han's (2017) responses rated teachers' fairness as being most important and teachers' knowledge of theories and practice, linguistic competence, and their use of materials as being least important. Barnes and Lock (2010) collected 38 first-year university students' responses to characteristics of effective EFL teachers. They drew a list of five attributes of effective EFL teachers. Of these, rapport was regarded as the most important whereas organization and preparation were ascribed as least important. Barnes and Lock's (2013) quantitative findings confirmed their previous qualitative data. That is, rapport was rated as the most important, and organization and preparation as the least important.

Differences in the findings of these previous studies call for more studies in various EFL contexts, especially in contexts with differences in research settings and participant attributes. As a consequence, a plural understanding of characteristics of effective EFL teachers may not only be drawn but also compared to help create a more complete list of attributes of effective EFL teachers and teaching. In particular, this list could equip EFL teacher educators in organizing and preparing better teacher training programs. Current and future EFL teachers could also profit from the list. Their knowledge of what is expected from them could help these teachers tailor their instructional practices to better correspond to their students' needs. It could also help facilitate teacher cooperation in teaching and learning, and this could help EFL teachers adjust to a new educational environment more efficiently. More importantly, findings from this study re-emphasize that teaching requires

“committed professionalism, dedication, and care for the students’ learning and well-being” (Flores, 2020, p. 236).

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## **Authentic Audience and the Oral Presentation: A Case Study in an EFL Context**

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The purpose of this research study is to explore the effect of including authentic audiences in an oral presentation project through synchronous computer-mediated communication. The participants were 20 EFL college students' who discussed their perception and motivation regarding the authenticity in their oral presentation. Data were collected from synchronous interaction recordings, reflective essays, and oral evaluation rubrics. Content analysis was adopted to analyze body language, pronunciation, content, fluency, grammar, structure, linking language, and interaction with the audience. The results showed that the authentic interaction for participants was positive for the following language learning factors: motivation, preparation, willingness to communicate, language anxiety, vocabulary, and intercultural understanding. The implication of the study is that creating an authentic language-learning environment can lead to develop of oral speaking.

*Keywords:* authenticity, authentic audience, oral skills, students' perceptions, learner motivation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) context have a disadvantageous position over English learners in an English as a second language (ESL) context. This is because their learning is mostly confined to the classroom and they do not have the opportunity to practice the target language in genuine settings. Therefore, authenticity has been routinely called for in English language teaching (ELT) to create a communicative language environment (Nunan 2004; Mishan 2005; Harding 2007). The concept of authenticity is to expose learners to "real

English with intrinsically communicative quality” (Lee, 1995, p. 324). This is important because studies of second language classroom interaction suggest that cooperative and comprehensible interactions facilitate second language learning.

In addition, EFL students also have higher foreign language anxiety in oral presentation compared to the receptive skills of reading and writing. Therefore, the affective variables are one of the various variables that affect target language performance, and the language anxiety level has a debilitating effect in speaking a foreign language. Thus, students should be provided with a variety of practice opportunities to lower the affective filter in the learning process (Krashen, 1982).

The purpose of this study includes examining the authenticity that occurs in foreign language learning and examining how the authenticity facilitates learning. The concept of authenticity is to expose learners to “real English with intrinsically communicative quality” (Lee, 1995, p. 324). Eventually, the language learners can use this skill in their future jobs (Nunan, 2004). Implementing authenticity is also a paradigm shift from structural language teaching to communicative language teaching (Nunan, 1991). In a typical EFL classroom, students may be taught grammar and rules, with the result of students still facing oral communication challenges because of the language learning process. Nunan (2004) states that language should no longer be viewed as the acquisition of grammatical rules to be taught to students; instead, it is the acquisition of a communication system. Students should know the rules and appropriate uses of the language for different purposes. Therefore, the classroom should create an authentic communicative environment to facilitate communicative competence.

### **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative competence involves great complexity, such as the knowledge and purpose of language, including its uses in different contexts; strategies in resolving communication breakdowns; and the ability to express unrehearsed communication. Therefore, the communicative language teaching approach was adopted to develop one’s communicative competence. In this study, the most practical definition of “communicative competence,” proposed by Savignon (1983), describes language use as a dynamic process:

Communication is dynamic rather than ... static... [It] is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experiences of similar kind. (p. 87)

## **Synchronous Voice Computer-Mediated Communication**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a broad term that encompasses various forms of communication through networked computers, and it can be conducted in different modalities (e.g., synchronous/asynchronous audio or video interaction). Moreover, synchronous voice computer-mediated communication (SVCMC) provides a platform that closely resembles face-to-face communication, and it can overcome the spatial limits for users.

Therefore, developments in communications and information technology have necessitated a reappraisal of authenticity in language teaching and learning in light of the unlimited access to authentic language material and interactions with the target language. Studies have confirmed that CMC is also a feasible solution for improving speaking skills (Perez, 2003) and reducing anxiety in this context.

The current COVID-19 pandemic situation that the world is going through has urged changes to the study abroad and face-to-face immersion experience in language learning. Additionally, having a long-term or short-term study abroad experience is challenging for students because of the financial hurdles to study abroad. Thanks to advances in technology, CMC has become the track upon which the train of language education is quickly heading toward its destination. Technology has provided possibilities for collaborative construction in second language learning. In particular, CMC provides a broader range of interactions among native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS).

Motivated by the issue of authenticity and CMC, the author conducted a case study to further examine the impact that the presence of an authentic audience may have on student oral presentations in a CMC context. This study aims to broaden the knowledge of authenticity in oral development through authentic interactions between college EFL learners and native/fluent speakers of English since relatively few studies have been devoted to examining this interaction, not to mention in EFL classrooms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

EFL learning theory that draws on sociocultural theory highlights that knowledge is constructed dialogically through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, theories of language acquisition emphasize the need for practice in the context of “real operating conditions” (Johnson 1988), that is, “learners need the opportunity to practice language in the same conditions that apply in real-life situations” (Ellis, 2003, p. 113). It is suggested that “authenticity is the link between the classroom and the outside reality” (Canado & Esteban, 2005, p. 37), and that “the more authentically the classroom mirrors the real world, the more real the rehearsal will be and the better the learning and transfer will be” (Arnold, 1991, p. 237). Regarding oral speaking, Goh and Burns (2012) stated that “speaking is a highly complex and dynamic skill that involves the use of several simultaneous processes – cognitive, physical, and sociocultural – and a speaker’s knowledge and skills have to be activated rapidly in real time” (p. 166). From a sociocultural perspective, involving learners in an authentic and meaningful context will help them develop communicative competence.

### **Authenticity**

*Authenticity* can be defined in many different ways, but Herrington and Oliver (2000) provide a comprehensive framework to define authenticity in learning. The following nine elements are suggested to develop authentic learning (Herrington & Oliver, 2000, p. 3–4):

1. Provide authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life.
2. Provide authentic activities.
3. Provide access to expert performances and the modeling of processes.
4. Provide multiple roles and perspectives.
5. Support collaborative construction of knowledge.
6. Promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed.
7. Promote articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit.
8. Provide coaching and scaffolding by the teacher at critical times.
9. Provide authentic assessment of learning within the tasks.

Other authors (Cranton, 2001; Cranton & King, 2003) have emphasized similar elements of authentic learning. For example, according to Cranton (2001), authenticity is the process of coming to know one's genuine self within the context of one's work and the expression of the genuine self within the classroom learning community. It is a specialized form of communication that has learning as its goal. Good communication is based on authenticity, a characteristic fundamental to achieve effective teaching (Cranton & King, 2003).

Authenticity in a language classroom can be presented in different ways. For example, Mishan (2003) discussed several elements, including materials, activities, texts, and discourse types, that can enhance authenticity. First, authentic materials are unedited or unmodified from their original purposes and can include items such as unpublished magazines, original restaurant menus, unedited articles, and audio-visual materials from the internet. Arnold (1991), however, suggested that the use of authentic materials does not guarantee authentic interaction or authentic responses.

Second, authenticity should also engage students in authentic interactions and responses. Wiggins (2009) noted that when writers care about their audience, they strive to craft their language use and purposes.

Third, students can engage in different discourse types with native or fluent speakers of English because learning a language is complex. Exposure to different discourse types is important to help students develop the different types of language competence that they need in their daily lives and career. Thus, incorporating authentic text is beneficial, as it is "a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (Morrow, 1997, p. 13).

## **Foreign Language Anxiety**

Anxiety in language learning is an important research area because it plays a critical role in target language performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as beyond "fears transferred to foreign language learning. Rather, we need to conceive foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Because of the complexity of the notion of anxiety, it is important to assist students to

engage in cognitive thinking while performing tasks in the target language. When discussing anxiety in oral presentation, we recognize that there are many different reasons why people struggle with speech anxiety. This type of anxiety is called *situation specific anxiety*, which is triggered by a particular situation, for example, public speaking or taking an exam. Al-Nouh et al. (2004) confirmed that anxiety can impede EFL students' production and achievement.

Unfortunately, the factors that trigger anxiety are complex, but students can develop affective strategies to overcome emotional factors. For example, Oxford (1990) believed that language learners can use affective strategies to control many factors to stabilize one's emotions, lower anxiety, and self-encourage. Once they develop these affective strategies, they tend to become good language learners that can control their learning (Naiman et al., 1996). In addition, Brown (2000) extended the discussion of language anxiety; he indicated that some degree of anxiety can be facilitative in language learning.

## Previous Studies

There have been numerous studies that have shown that technology contributed directly to improving speaking skills. Blake (2016) confirmed that computer-mediated communication, like voice chat or videoconferencing, can create more collaboration in language development.

The following studies present how the inclusion of an authentic audience facilitates second language development and perceived benefits in the EFL contexts. For example, Starks (1996) reported that interacting with a real audience in authentic settings helped students to learn the subtle effect that cultural and social factors have on a speech event. Bueno Alastuey (2011) compared two groups of students who were paired up with the same first language peers face-to-face (control group) and different first language peers (experimental group) through a synchronous voice-based computer-mediated communication (CMC). The findings showed that achievements were significantly better in the experimental group, as they were able to develop speaking skills in foreign language contexts. The participants perceived an "increased value ... in satisfaction, feeling of improvement, likelihood of future use, and perception of need fulfilled together with decreased speaking anxiety" (p. 428). Thus, the study suggested that having a partner who speaks a different first language is a great opportunity in foreign language

classrooms. In a recent qualitative study conducted by Alvarado et al. (2018), nine Mexican students participated in a four-month eTandem language learning exchange through synchronous CMC with native speakers of English. The results showed that participants perceived the exchange experience as allowing them to improve speaking skills, and they gained a better understanding of the cultures of their partners.

More research should be conducted in the area of English speaking related to authentic audiences in the EFL contexts, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap in research on authentic situations in which EFL learners present their oral projects.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design (Yin, 2003) incorporating a case study strategy to explore EFL students' perceptions about the authentic audience present for their oral presentation. This research design was appropriate for connecting experiences to events (Barnham, 2015). Thus, the research gathered qualitative data, such as videos, reflective essays, and peer-reviewed feedback to understand the research purpose. The data set allowed respondents to explore more information, struggles, reflection, attitudes, feelings, and their understanding of their learning.

### **Research Questions**

This study posited two research questions:

- RQ1. How would EFL college students perceive the experience and challenge of having an authentic audience for an oral presentation?
- RQ2. How would authenticity enhance the oral presentation preparation and learning?

### **Participants**

The participants in the study were comprised of 20 EFL college students who were enrolled in an English oral presentation course in an

English department in Northern Taiwan. The course's objective was to improve the students' speaking proficiency and English expressions. The participants' English proficiency was based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, Teaching, Assessment at pre-intermediate (CEFR A2–B1) and intermediate levels (CEFR B1–B2). All of the participants were taught by the same instructor.

The access to participants was through my former colleague, who was looking for authentic learning opportunities for his students. Therefore, I coordinated with authentic audience members who could serve as oral presentation evaluators. First, authentic speakers were defined as either native or bilingual speakers of English. They were individuals who acquired the first language in childhood and had intuitive knowledge about English grammar. Second, they were proficient speakers of English, who could produce fluent and spontaneous discourse. They were authentic speakers because the language was produced by a real speaker. They also conveyed a real message during their interaction with the participants (Gilmore, 2007).

## **The Roles of the Researcher**

I played two main roles in this study: researcher and oral evaluator. First, as a researcher, I constructed research design consisting of an assessment conducted by native and bilingual speakers with near-native English proficiency, speaking assessment criteria, and prompts for reflection. I explained the rubric to the rest of the oral evaluators, and students were informed that their oral presentation would be evaluated by the rubric. The use of a rubric sought to avoid potential bias in evaluating the participants. Second, I was also one of the evaluators who scored the students' oral presentation. This role allowed me to make appropriate observations of the participants.

## **SOURCES OF DATA AND COLLECTION**

### **Oral Presentation Recordings**

Twenty oral presentation recordings in English were collected, and each presentation was approximately 12–15 minutes in length. The oral

presentations were conducted over six different weeks, and there were 3–4 student presenters each time. The oral presentation was conducted through a synchronous Zoom session. The participants' presentation topics ranged from lifestyles to different specific issues in their culture. For example, the topics included transportation, tourism, people, religion, criminology, and social issues from the presenters' contexts.

## **Reflective Essays**

After the oral presentation, the students received their oral recording. The students had to watch their oral presentation recording and write a reflective essay that answered the questions provided. The prompts focused on the struggles of developing oral English proficiency, investment of time and effort, feedback, reflection, and suggestions. One of the purposes of authentic learning is to provide the opportunity to reflect. In this study, students reflected on learning resources and strategies, and this is why the reflection essays were included in the study.

## **Oral Presentation Rubric**

The oral presentation rubric served as a coherent set of criteria for the students' oral presentation that included descriptions of the different levels of oral performance quality. The rubric evaluated the participants' oral skills in the following categories: understanding of the audience, body language, pronunciation, content, visual props, fluency, grammar and structure, linking language, and interaction with the audience.

## **Self-Evaluation Rubric**

Another source of data was the students' self-evaluation on a five-point Likert scale. The students were asked eight questions regarding their perception of the presentation activity, understanding of their learning, culture, motivation, and willingness to conduct the activity. Table 1 displays the questions comprising the self-evaluation.

**TABLE 1. Self-Evaluation Questions**

- 
1. The presentation activity helped my oral English proficiency development.
  2. I liked the presentation activity.
  3. From the presentation preparation, I better understand my own culture.
  4. I thought that the presentation activity made English speaking meaningful.
  5. The interaction with the teachers in the U.S.A. was helpful in developing my oral English proficiency.
  6. The presentation activity encouraged me to develop my oral English proficiency.
  7. I learned something from my classmates' presentations.
  8. I would like to take part in this presentation activity again.
- 

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed thoroughly and systematically according to the process described by Moustakas's (1994) approach of phenomenological analysis. This approach aimed to explore how people experience a phenomenon and employed phenomenological reduction to construct textual descriptions (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). First, I read through all of the reflective essays that the participants wrote, and I made researcher field notes about themes related to the research questions that seemed to be emerging.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Experiences and Challenges of an Authentic Audience**

#### **Modality of Learning**

The first research question explored the EFL college students' experiences and challenges when presenting their projects to real audiences. The first finding was that the participants stated that the modality of learning was meaningful. A meaningful learning modality in general can keep learners engaged and perform better in the learning outcome. Therefore, planning an engaging activity could attract the students' attention. The finding showed that the majority of participants expressed a positive response on the modality of learning from their self-evaluation scale. The participants strongly agreed that presenting to

an authentic audience provided them an engaging learning context to share their learning. This course project was a meaningful activity to reinforce their learning. For example, they appreciated that the feedback from the American oral evaluators as well as their peers and course instructors was sincere. The authentic interaction and the receiving of feedback from different parties allowed them to recognize their areas for improvement in the oral English presentation, as exemplified in these responses:

I am impressed in remote education to interact with teachers in the USA. I have never seen a way that can easily let the foreign teachers join our course. I think the topic for us to do the presentation is meaningful. [Paulin]

This is my first experience of video conference and presentation for teachers in U.S.A. I think the teaching method is interesting. [Jennifer]

The part I really like about the presentation activity is the title of the presentation and the interaction with teachers in U.S.A. Taiwan is my hometown hence I am so proud and privileged to introduce this beautiful island to teachers in U.S.A. What's more is the reaction of the teachers in U.S.A. They listen to the presentation very attentively and gives responds with sincere desire, kind and encouragement. [Kevin]

I like the part of interaction with teachers in the U.S.A. Because I had never done this before, it is a really special experience for me. [Mable]

## **Opportunity**

The second finding of the experience is that the participants stated that this was a great opportunity to practice language with a fluent native speaker. For example, studying abroad may not be affordable for many students. In particular, a language learner may want to immerse themselves with target language speakers and a new culture. Unfortunately, students may face financial and psychological challenges while living in a new country. The findings showed that being able to interact with target language speakers is an opportunity to practice English oral speaking. For instance,

I can speak with teacher in U.S.A is also another point I like very much; I rarely speak to foreigner, it's glad to speak with them. [Jonathan]

The most interesting part of the presentation is that I can interact to the teachers in the U.S., that's a greatest opportunity to me that I can show them all the famous street food here in Taipei. [Lydia]

### **High Affective Filter**

In the first research question, the students were asked to discuss the challenges faced when conducting oral presentations with an authentic audience. The participants discussed the level of emotional status during the presentation. Krashen (1982) discussed different emotional variables that can play a role in second language acquisition. When a learner's feelings or anxiety is elevated, language learning becomes difficult. The findings confirmed that one of the main difficulties in making an oral presentation was anxiety, or fear of speaking (Al-Nouh et al., 2004). Based on this hypothesis, a learner should be provided opportunities to lower their affective filter in language learning. For instance, one participant, May, mentioned that she was very nervous, but she enjoyed her presentation because of the interaction with an authentic audience:

I was the first person to do the presentation, so I was very nervous. I was afraid to speak something wrong or they do not know what I am talking about. Fortunately, the teachers in the U.S.A. did really like the attraction that I prepared, and they do enjoy the presentation. I can feel that through their eyes. [May]

My biggest problem is about my nervousness, if I get nervous I would spoke very fast during the presentation; So that classmates and teachers can't not really understand what I was talking about. [Lydia]

### **Challenges in Oral Presentations**

The participants were asked to reflect on what challenges they encountered before and during their oral presentation, and the following themes were found. Besides a peak in anxiety, linguistic problems created the main challenges while giving the oral presentation.

## **The Lack of Vocabulary and Expression**

The participants expressed that a lack of vocabulary posed a challenge in presenting their topics to an authentic audience. According to Zappa-Hollman (2007), linguistic problems were seen as the most challenging during oral presentations. It is because the participant could not convey their thoughts on the topics they were presenting and had difficulties in comprehending the questions from an authentic audience. Similarly, some studies investigated the reasons behind the students' anxiety, such as a lack of vocabulary (Subasi, 2010; Mazdayasna, 2012), while others proposed ways to overcome these difficulties, such as choosing a familiar topic and practicing a lot (Zappa-Hollman, 2007). The lack of vocabulary is asserted to in this participant's remark:

When I did my presentation, I felt that I could not find other descriptive words to enrich my presentation. I paused to think about if I can find other words, but I repeated words I used again. [Lydia]

## **Sociocultural Differences**

People who live in different areas would have different backgrounds, and these differences will have an impact on language use and comprehension. Thus, language can be understood better when it is associated with cultural patterns and behaviors. The development of a language is not only the acquisition of language but also the acquisition of underlying cultural norms. The last challenge found was that the disconnection with sociocultural knowledge created a communication breakdown.

For example, one participant, Johnathan, was describing a leisure water facility called "public pool" (公共池) in a resort. The purpose of this open area is for the public to rest and relax by sitting next to a small pool, instead of swimming in this area. After his presentation, one member of the audience asked, "I can go to the public pool to swim in my country, so where is the public pool I can go to in your country?" The participant explained the public pool in his presentation and provided an accurate answer. The data showed that there was a disconnection in understanding the subject between members of two different cultures.

## Language Transfer

Language transfer is defined as the use of a first language in a second language context (Gass & Selinker, 1994). Moreover, it is also the process of using knowledge of the first language in learning a second language (Ellis, 1985). From this perspective, language transfer could be positive or negative:

I was nervous and I had to process the questions in Chinese. Although I was panicked when the teachers asked questions, it made me answer the wrong questions, but overall this activity still impressed me a lot. [Johnson]

## Authenticity Enhancement of Presentation Preparation and Learning

The second research question in this study aimed to discover how the authentic experience enhanced the preparation and learning. Participants were informed that they had to present their topics to audiences in the U.S.A., and they felt motivated to ensure that they were fully prepared for this presentation. For example,

I spent more time to prepare the presentation, and she had to make sure that the accuracy of using vocabulary and phrase. [Lily]

I postponed my selected presentation schedule, because I was very nervous, and I needed more time to prepare to make sure I can do well. [Julia]

## Motivation

The link between authenticity and motivation is something often alluded to but very difficult to prove. In this study, the participants expressed that they had enjoyed the project, and they were willing to invest more time and effort to prepare the content and practice. The data have shown a positive tendency of students being motivated to present their project and receive feedback from their peers, an authentic audience, and their professor. For example, the participants liked the attentiveness and feedback from an authentic audience. One participant stated,

I favorite the part of interacting with teachers in American. Because

they always be kindly to listen to our presentation. They give some suggestions to present gently. The teachers in American are open-minded person that I could take it easier when I share something to the audience. [Alex]

### **Unplanned Discourse**

The authentic presentation experience provided a great opportunity for EFL students to put themselves into a situation in which they needed to interact with unplanned discourse. The findings showed that the participants experienced unplanned speech when they examined their understanding and communication strategies. Unplanned speech is considered “spoken interactive discourse” (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 18). A speaker can see features, including repetitions, simple active sentences, the speaker and listener combining to construct propositions, and the stringing together of clauses with *and*, *or*, *but*. It can also include the juxtapositioning of clauses with no overt links at all, deletion of subjects as well as references, and an informal syntax (Schegloff et al., 1977). Therefore, the unplanned discourse provided an instance of learning for the language learner. One participant explained their experience this way:

Not only did I concentrate on taking notes about those foreign teachers’ advice, but many significant words spoken by them have encouraged me to try something new and not to dread anything horrible. Besides, I’ve believed that those feedback written by my fellow students have been the stimuli for me to make much progress. [Leo]

### **Actions**

For the second research question, the participants were asked what their actions to prepare for this oral presentation were. The findings showed that the participants applied different strategies to present their topics to the audience. First, the participants discussed plans to prepare for their oral presentation. For example,

First, I think about the purpose of the presentation, the subject of my presentation, my prospective audience and the length of the presentation activity. Then I start writing some scripts with the key points and outline my presentation. Next is to create a clear and logical structure. After that, I would design my presentation slides and try to let the slides be brief and attracting. Last and the most

important is to practice. [Ariel]

### **Research and Rehearsal**

While putting a presentation together, the participants used different research approaches to gather information for the topic and rehearse incoming information. Rehearsal is a repetitive review of materials previously gathered or learned with the intent or goal of later recall (Reber et al., 2009). Here are two examples of approaches to research:

I found information [research] about Eslite bookstore (Topic of the presentation): For example, the branches of Eslite which are in Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong, etc. And the details of 24-hours bookstore. After I finished my PowerPoint, I continued to practice my speech [rehearsal] for making it fluency; Then reviewed my PowerPoint to check the mistakes, and corrected them. [Fanny]

I did a lot of research regarding the origin and clinical practices of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Also, I have consulted my TCM doctor for professional opinions. [Patricia]

### **Major Gain Through Language Learning: Cultural Knowledge**

Culture and language are inseparable, and their relationship is highly complex. Learners must understand specific cultural contexts along with linguistic principles as a central part of effective language acquisition. The participants in this study expressed that they had gained a better understanding of how to examine their own cultures and think about cultural patterns through preparing their presentations. Thus, the findings showed that participants felt proud and privileged to share their culture and cultural identity with their audience. For example, the participants mentioned the following:

This is a great opportunity to me that I can show them all the famous street food here in Taipei. [Liang]

I like the most is the interaction with teachers in U.S.A. because we can promote Taiwan culture to more foreigners, and they may be interested about our country. [Shirley]

I have to mention one interesting thing, professors in U.S.A. were intrigued to go see Chinese Medicine because of my speech, it's

rewarding for me. [Margaret]

## DISCUSSION

This study described how an authentic interaction embedded in an EFL class promotes a positive oral development experience. The findings indicate that the characteristics of the authentic interactions were mainly perceived as a key aspect of learning a foreign language. In this respect, the participants appreciated using English for a real purpose, receiving feedback, and reflecting on their learning. The participants valued the opportunity to reflect on their current language proficiency and re-shape their learning to enhance their English proficiency.

First, in an EFL context, creating an authentic learning context adds value to develop language use ability. In addition to all the positive factors from engaging in authentic learning, the unplanned discourse learning could provide a different stimulus to language acquisition.

Second, the design of this study required a vast amount of time and coordination between two countries; however, it was feasible due to the access to information technology. Hence, more synchronous computer-mediated communication learning platforms will be employed for distance learning, but the selection of technology should facilitate the planned learning outcomes rather than the technology tools dictating the learning tasks that can be planned.

### Pedagogical Implications

The study demonstrates that integrating authenticity into an oral presentation project is helpful for students to continue to develop their oral proficiency, particularly by having the opportunity to interact with native or near-native speakers in an English-speaking country. Therefore, in order to continue to create oral skills in authentic contexts, the following structured activities are highly recommended.

First, it is highly recommended that the course instructor establishes different service-learning networks, so that the students can present their project to the local and international communities. Second, the course project design can include collaborative learning among peers (i.e., an English corner, an English village, conversation partners). These

pedagogical implications can be achieved through partnerships, and they can be done within the classroom (e.g., role-plays, group discussions, debates, discussion facilitators). The rationale is to provide students with the ability to use English meaningfully in real-world settings.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

For EFL learners, developing an oral presentation in English is more challenging compared to other language domains. Thus, this study indicates the need to provide a supportive, welcoming, and authentic environment for students to give their presentations. Harding (2007) stresses the importance for language teachers to make use of authentic materials from specific-purpose subject matter, make tasks as authentic as possible, and “bring the classroom into the real world and bring the real world into the classroom” (p. 11). The ultimate goal is to motivate students to take their learning to the next level and bridge learning between the classroom and real contexts.

### **Limitation and Future Study**

This study had a major limitation in that the study was not able to measure the students’ actual speaking improvement because there was no pre- and post-test involved. The study relied on naturalistic occurring data and reflection. Therefore, future studies should consider assessment before and after the application of the research variable.

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# A Comparative Analysis of School English and IELTS Speaking Bands for East Asians and Western Europeans

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Due to insufficient research regarding school English learning experiences (e.g., the grammar-translation method vs. communicative language teaching) and its impact on students' English-speaking proficiency, this study was conducted to identify to what extent classroom English usage and teachers' speaking proficiency could impact students' high and low speaking proficiency through the results of a certified English-speaking exam (i.e., IELTS). A cross-sectional, quantitative questionnaire was designed for Bond University international students ( $N = 20$ ) from East Asia ( $n = 12$ ) and Western Europe ( $n = 8$ ) for delivery online and offline. The results showed that students' speaking proficiency was plausibly affected by the frequent use of English from teachers ( $r(20) = .67$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and students ( $r(20) = .45$ ,  $p = .05$ ) as well as their teachers' speaking proficiency ( $r(20) = .55$ ,  $p = .01$ ). However, differences were also found between East Asian and Western European groups. Moreover, class-related problems and educational policies appeared to be related to East Asians' English-speaking proficiency. This study shares the limitations of small-scale quantitative research and convenient/snowball sampling. The study sheds light on the hindrances to communicative language teaching (CLT) implementations in East Asia. Both teachers and students need to work together for successful CLT practices as well as governments for achievable CLT policies in East Asia.

*Keywords:* East Asia, Western Europe, grammar-translation method  
CLT, school English, IELTS speaking

## INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, low English proficiency of East Asians is well known

(Zavyalova & Primak, 2015); in contrast, Western Europeans seem to be good English speakers even though both are from non-English-speaking background countries. Mostly, language similarities are acknowledged for Western Europeans' competency in development of literacy as their languages are also alphabetic (Martin, 2017; Naghdipour, 2015). However, East Asians' English deficiency can not only be explained by the nature of their languages, which stem from Chinese characters. In the same manner of any other human development, not only the natural factors but also the aspects of experience exist (Crain & Thornton, 2012) – nature versus nurture. Apart from the language differences and similarities, the nurture of English (e.g. English education at school) needs to be taken into account.

## **TWO DISTINCT APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching methodologies have continuously developed, changed, and integrated as English has taken a significant role worldwide as a medium of communication since the beginning of the twentieth century (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Due to the creation of contemporary methods in the twentieth century, others are considered as old-fashioned and disregarded (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). However, even though there is a tendency toward modern curricula, the constant use of certain methods have been applied to students generally in their nations – the grammar-translation method (GTM) in East Asia (Le Gal & I Chou, 2015) and communicative language teaching (CLT) in Western Europe (Howatt & Smith, 2014). These were described by Natsir and Sanjaya (2014) in their comparative analysis as being distinctly different from “the approach and history of theory since GTM is a very classic method; in contrast, CLT is one of the latest methods that is used by teachers in many countries today in ESL/EFL classrooms” (p. 58).

### **From GTM Toward CLT: Changing Waves in East Asia**

GTM, which is also known as the classical method, was first introduced from about a century ago, and it was to help students “to read

and appreciate foreign language literature” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 13). As it is a century old, it has been prominently implemented by East Asian teachers. In spite of its venerability, it has received disapproving critiques from researchers. Brown (2007) disregarded it as a “stalwart” (p. 16) regardless of other rival methods even though it has nothing to do with the development of learners’ skills of communication. In addition, Richards and Rodgers (2014) stated that GTM was unfavorably reputed by a number of students due to its focus on grammar rules and vocabulary, which were impractical for communication. By acknowledging these problems, the movement towards CLT began to be instituted and utilized in East Asia by framing different English language curriculums (Butler, 2015; Li & Baldauf, 2011).

Despite all the efforts for more than a decade to integrate CLT into established curriculums, many researchers have found numerous unconfirmed outcomes (Abe, 2013; Butler, 2011; Lee, 2014; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Morita, 2015; Rao, 2013). According to Li and Baldauf (2011), difficulties in implementing CLT in East Asia have been identified because of class-related problems such as lack of teacher’s speaking competency, teaching materials and class time, and large class sizes (Butler, 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016), the pressure of tests (Lee, 2014) and cultural defiance (Morita, 2015). Through his qualitative research of CLT evaluation, Lee (2014) identified test pressures via the teachers’ points of view. He states that middle and high school Korean teachers are highly concerned about “the low feasibility of CLT due to students’ lack of proficiency/motivation and reading-focused KSAT [college entrance exam]” (p. 14). In addition, English as a medium of “high-stake educational assessments” (Hu & McKay, 2012, p. 359) policy, which is commonly shared in three East Asian countries, positions examinations as a doorkeeper.

## **CLT in Europe from “The Threshold Level” and Revisiting GTM**

After describing all variations of CLT in their book, Richards and Rodgers (2014) concluded that CLT has one concrete objective: language and communication are interconnected and their focus is heavily on communication and language use in contrast to grammar or structures. In

addition, they illustrate the European communicative language program called “The Threshold Level,” which was developed by British linguistic professionals including D. A. Wilkins, who first established the notional-functional approach (one of the main theories of CLT) because of the Europeans’ demands of English learning in 1971. The communicative language program was described by Richards and Rodgers (2014) as follows:

The Council of Europe incorporated his [Wilkins’s] semantic/communicative analysis into a set of specifications for a first-level communicative language syllabus. These Threshold Level specifications (van Ek & Alexander 1980) have had a strong influence on the design of communicative language programs and textbooks in Europe. (p. 85)

The Threshold Level was the initial system that carefully considered the possible, conventional situations that speakers might have to confront or express about feelings and opinions such as questions or complaints in everyday life (van Ek & Trim, 1998). Furthermore, Roberts (2004) stated that this system included a minimum of grammar structures for each situation, so it is called “The Threshold Level.”

This syllabus was a pioneer that has led the “Communication Period (1970–2000+)” (Howatt & Smith, 2014, p. 76) across European countries. In their study of the European history of English education, Howatt and Smith further explained that the aims of CLT have shifted towards competency of English skills that can equip users for use in the real world. Interestingly, however, the needs for grammar in CLT classrooms has shed new light on the matter from about two decades after the introduction of CLT (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Hos & Kecec, 2014; Savignon, 1991) due to the tendency to forfeit accuracy while achieving fluency in English.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM (IELTS) SPEAKING**

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is mainly divided into two modules on the basis of the test-taker’s purpose for taking the test, such as for studying or for working in an

English-speaking country: one is called IELTS Academic and the other is IELTS General Training. It is composed of four different sections: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The IELTS Speaking test is in the format of a one-on-one and face-to-face interview. It is fairly valid to assess IELTS candidates' English-speaking level. For example, Roshan (2013) critically reviewed the validity of the revised IELTS Speaking test based on two studies done by Brown in 2006, and the validity between the band descriptor and the score was supported by an empirical analysis and investigation of examiners' verbal reports and survey.

### **The Impact of CLT During IELTS Speaking Preparation**

Some researchers have found a relationship between communicative English teaching during IELTS test preparation and improvement of test-takers' IELTS Speaking band scores. According to the study by Rabab'ah (2016), students who trained through the communicative EFL course based on the CLT approach had higher IELTS Speaking scores compared to the group who engaged in the normal conversational course. This shows that students who prepare for the IELTS Speaking test through CLT perform better by achieving higher speaking band scores.

### **A Counterpoint to the 2015 IELTS Speaking Band Average**

IELTS "Test taker performance 2015" figures show the averages of various and different score achievements based on the test-taker's place of origin and first language (IELTS, 2017). Tables 1 and 2 below were condensed from the originals and rearranged for a clear display of the comparison of performances between Western Europeans and East Asians. The test-takers from France, Germany, and Italy attained higher speaking band scores than the ones from Japan, South Korea, and China (see Table 1), and first languages presented similar results (see Table 2).

East Asian English teachers and educators have been struggling to implement CLT; whereas Western European English education seems to be progressing efficiently. The consequences of these matters appear to be reflected in the learners' polarized English-speaking achievements based on their average IELTS Speaking results.

**TABLE 1. Mean Speaking Band Scores for Six Places of Origin**

Place of Origin	Speaking Band Score
France	6.6
Germany	7.3
Italy	6.5
China	5.4
Japan	5.6
South Korea	5.7

**TABLE 2. Mean Speaking Band Scores for Six First Language Backgrounds**

First Language	Speaking Band Score
French	6.6
German	7.3
Italian	6.5
Chinese	5.5
Japanese	5.6
Korean	5.7

## **IDENTIFIED RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It is not clear from the research to what extent English learning experiences in East Asian and Western European schools (e.g., via the grammar-teaching method or communicative language teaching) have impacted English-speaking proficiency.

### **Research Questions**

Therefore, the following research questions were identified:

- RQ1. To what extent do IELTS Speaking bands relate to Bond University East Asian and Western European international students' classroom English usage?
- RQ2. To what extent do IELTS Speaking bands relate to Bond University East Asian and Western European international students' teacher's speaking competency or deficiency?

## Research Aim and Hypothesis

It is the aim of this study to discover why East Asians' English-speaking skills are not developed enough to achieve higher IELTS Speaking band scores compared to Western Europeans by considering their previous English learning at school. It is hypothesized that the students who learn English at school through communicative language teaching (CLT) obtain higher IELTS Speaking band scores.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of participants' IELTS Speaking band scores and differences between the two groups (East Asians vs. Western Europeans) are reported in Table 3.

**TABLE 3. IELTS Speaking Band Scores**

Group	<i>M</i> Score (Range)	<i>SD</i>
East Asians ( <i>n</i> = 12)	5.33 (3–8)	1.67
Western Europeans ( <i>n</i> = 8)	7.63 (5–10)	2.07
Total ( <i>N</i> = 20)	6.25 (3–10)	2.12

In relation to the internal reliability, three CLT-related questions (e.g., How much teachers/students spoke in English classes, English-speaking competency of teachers) have internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of .77.

The hypothesis was that the students who studied English in communicative classes where both teachers and students spoke in English actively would have higher IELTS Speaking scores. To assess this, the relationship between the IELTS Speaking band score and the teachers'/students' English use in class was investigated using Pearson's *r* test. There was a strong, positive correlation between IELTS scores and teachers' English use in class ( $r(20) = .67, p = .001, r^2 = .45$ ) and students' use of English in class also correlated with IELTS scores ( $r(20) = .45, p = .05, r^2 = .20$ ). A similar correlation was found in Western Europeans ( $r(8) = .73, p = .04, r^2 = .53$ ) in relation to the two variables (students' English use and IELTS scores); whereas, there was no

significant correlation in East Asians ( $r(12) = .04, p = .90, r^2 = .002$ ). In the two groups, the result of the effect of their previous English schooling (both primary and secondary) on IELTS scores was a positive correlation ( $r(20) = .62, p = .004, r^2 = .38$ ).

Furthermore, in relation to their English education at school, a negative relationship was found between the first year of learning English at school and their IELTS Speaking band scores ( $r(20) = -.54, p = .01, r^2 = .29$ ); in fact, a strong, negative correlation was found in Western Europeans ( $r(8) = -.88, p = .004, r^2 = .77$ ). In addition, a potential correlation between teachers' competency in English speaking and students' use of English in the classroom was found ( $r(20) = .55, p = .01, r^2 = .30$ ). Similarly, in East Asians, a strong correlation was found ( $r(12) = .65, p = .02, r^2 = .42$ ); however, no significant correlation was found in Western Europeans ( $r(8) < .001, p > .99$ ).

A Mann-Whitney U test revealed significant differences in IELTS Speaking band scores representing the speaking skills of East Asians and Western Europeans,  $U = 14, z = -2.803, p = .007$ , with a large effect size ( $r = .63$ ). Moreover, the test showed different achievements in East Asians and Western Europeans' IELTS Speaking band scores,  $U = 20.5, z = -2.154, p = .03, r = .48$ . In relation to the different achievements in IELTS scores between groups,  $t$ -testing revealed a significant difference in scores for East Asians ( $M = 5.33, SD = 1.68$ ) and Western Europeans ( $M = 7.63, SD = 2.07$ );  $t(20) = -2.738, p = .01$ . The magnitude of the difference in means (mean difference =  $-2.29$ , 95% CI:  $-4.05$  to  $-.53$ ) was very large (eta squared =  $.29$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the English-speaking deficiency of East Asians by comparing Bond University students' IELTS Speaking band scores and the relationship the scores have with the students' previous English learning in formal school settings to those of Western European students (e.g., GTM vs. CLT). The gap between East Asian and Western European students' IELTS Speaking band scores found in this research was similar to an IELTS report in 2015; in fact, Western European students achieved higher IELTS Speaking band scores compared to the East Asian group. Most interestingly, the result revealed that the higher the students' IELTS Speaking band scores were, the more

they considered their previous English schooling to have had an effect on their IELTS scores. Especially, most Western European students responded that their high IELTS scores had been affected a great deal by their previous schooling.

Using a quantitative, cross-sectional design, it was found that students who were exposed to active English communication in their English classes (e.g., CLT), where both students and teachers spoke in English frequently and teachers had a high proficiency in English speaking, seemed to be more competent in speaking English by achieving higher IELTS Speaking band scores.

### **Teachers' Use of English and Students' Speaking Proficiency**

As discussed in the Results section, the students who studied English in formal school settings where English was actively spoken by their teachers achieved higher IELTS Speaking scores. Conversely, the students whose teachers did not speak much English in class obtained lower IELTS scores. This seems to be in line with the study by Rabab'ah (2016), which found that teachers' CLT instructions can have a positive effect on students' IELTS Speaking scores. Notably, however, the results for groups divided into East Asians and Western Europeans showed no significant difference. A possible reason for this result is that the Western European students achieved higher IELTS Speaking scores than East Asian students responded that their teachers spoke in English a lot; whereas, Asian students achieved lower IELTS Speaking scores and responded that their teachers spoke only a little or no English in their classes.

It can be inferred from a number of studies why East Asian teachers speak in English less frequently in classes (Abe, 2013; Butler, 2011; Lee, 2014; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Morita, 2015; Rao, 2013). The pressure from the reading-and-listening-focused college entrance exam, which East Asians consider highly important, seems to be the most plausible reason, especially in secondary school education. Although the focus of CLT should be on the actual use of the target language (Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014; Roberts, 2004; Savignon, 1991), as it has been conducted successfully in many European countries (Howatt & Smith, 2014), the CLT activities are not practiced properly by East Asian teachers due to the high focus on the exam. For example, CLT activities in Japanese secondary schools are mostly about pre-recorded listening that prepares

students for the college entrance exam (Abe, 2013). This receptive English practice tendency is also found in China and the Republic of Korea (Butler, 2015; Lee, 2014).

Another possible reason for teachers' reduced English use is due to low English-speaking proficiency, which seems to be a hindrance to communicating confidently in English with their students. The results of this study suggest that the students spoke more in English during class when their teachers showed high proficiency in English. In contrast, students were likely to speak in English "a little" when their teachers were not competent in English and this seemed to have a greater influence on East Asian students, as a positive correlation was found. Seemingly, this indicates that East Asian students' use of English may depend on their teachers' English abilities. This result appears to correspond with other research (Butler, 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016), which views teachers' English deficiency as one of the reasons why CLT has not been implemented successfully in East Asia.

Recently, however, changes have been made in East Asia to increase teachers' English-speaking proficiency by training teachers to conduct CLT classes through English as a medium of instruction (EMI) with such techniques as teaching English through English (TETE) in the Republic of Korea (Shin, 2012). Additionally, programs for recruiting native English speakers called the Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET) and the English Program in Korea (EPIK; Carless, 2006) in those two countries have been implemented to provide EMI classes. Even though there are hindrances such as lack of teachers' confidence to teach in English through English even after pre- and in-service trainings (Shin, 2012) and insufficient understanding of East Asian culture by native English teachers (Carless, 2006), it is undeniable that the increase of teachers' competency in speaking English can help students speak more in English and further develop students' speaking competency.

### **Students' Use of English and Their Speaking Proficiency**

In relation to students' use of English in classes and their IELTS Speaking band scores, students' English use appears to be a key factor in higher IELTS score achievement as the positive correlation has previously shown; in fact, Western European students who answered that they used English in classes "a lot" obtained higher IELTS Speaking

scores. On the other hand, most East Asian students responded that they did not speak much English in classes and achieved relatively lower IELTS Speaking scores compared to the Western European students. A possible reason for East Asian students speaking in English less in class can be due to the influence of the college entrance exam, which requires them to listen and read only (Abe, 2013; Butler, 2015; Lee, 2014). Exam preparation influences both East Asian students and teachers. Also mentioned by Lee (2014) was that Korean teachers worried about the low feasibility of CLT practice because of students' lack of motivation to engage in CLT classes, since they were more focused on college entrance exam preparation.

Another factor that may induce students to speak less in English in classes may be related to the problem of large class size, which is common in East Asian countries and regarded as a hindrance to conducting CLT in East Asia (Butler, 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016). According to Harfitt (2012), language learners feel anxious about using the target language in a large-sized class and that the anxiety over using the target language is reduced in a small-sized class. This possibly can explain why CLT has been more successfully implemented in Western European schools than in East Asia since most European schools have relatively small-sized classes compared to Asian schools (Blatchford et al., 2017). More importantly, the problem of large classes can be amplified in East Asian culture because students feel extremely ashamed (often called "losing face") of making mistakes (Harfitt, 2012; Rao, 2013) in front of their peers. In other words, East Asian students may feel extremely anxious about speaking up in English class and are less likely to engage in authentic use of English due to the possibilities of losing face in front of a large number of students.

Additionally, in connection with the class-related problem, insufficient English class time (Butler, 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016) might be another reason for East Asian students to experience infrequent English communication and stagnation of their speaking skill development. As was presented in the results, the first year of learning English at school between East Asians and Western Europeans was highly different. According to the Ministry of Education (2015) of the Republic of Korea, from the third grade, students start learning English and the classes are conducted for two hours a week. Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Education (2014) of Italy, students start English learning from the first grade and in the third grade, they have

English classes three hours a week. This possibly indicates that East Asian students may not have enough exposure to English classes as compared to Western European students, and this could be another reason for East Asians' English deficiency in English language learning.

### **Students' Self-Reflection on Speaking Proficiencies Presented via IELTS**

Most Western European students appeared to agree that their IELTS Speaking band scores represented their speaking skills comprehensively; on the other hand, the majority of East Asian students did not see their IELTS Speaking scores as representing their English-speaking skills. Since there is no relevant information regarding this finding, this needs to be studied further.

### **LIMITATIONS**

It must be acknowledged that this study has several limitations. It shares the limitations of small-scale quantitative research and snowball/convenient sampling. A small number of participants was included due to the specified characteristics of the participants, such as being from certain countries and studying under special conditions (e.g., international students who graduated from their primary and secondary schools in their home countries and had taken a certified English speaking exam); thus, it is difficult to generalize the results. Furthermore, the ratio between the variables (e.g., East Asians and Western Europeans) was not even because more Asian students participated in surveys due to the nationality of the researcher. To sum up, the results should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

East Asian students' English-speaking skills seem to be closely related to their learning environments, which are influenced by their teachers' speaking skills, classroom organization (e.g., class size, class time) and exam policies. These factors can be key to successful CLT

implementation in East Asian schools; therefore, more research in this area is suggested. Though it is unquestionable that one of a teacher's essential roles in the classroom is to draw active English discourse from students, it can be challenging without student motivation or desire to engage in speaking in English. Therefore, students, as well as teachers, need to take on a more active role to increase their English-speaking abilities.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is true that English and Western European languages (e.g., German) share the Indo-European language family tree and word similarities exist; for example, English *son* is *sohn* in German (Horobin, 2016). However, this cannot solely explain Western Europeans' English-speaking competency nor East Asians' speaking deficiency. Emerging from "The Threshold," European countries widely conduct CLT in their schools for students to learn English by meeting the threshold of communicating in English (Council of Europe, 2001; van Ek & Trim, 1998). By realizing the importance of CLT, East Asian countries have made many changes, such as shifting their national English curriculums from a grammar-centered approach to a communicative approach (Butler, 2015; Li & Baldauf, 2011) and implementation of EMI (Carless, 2006; Shin, 2012). Unfortunately, there are a number of problems to implementing CLT successfully in East Asia (Abe, 2013; Butler, 2011; Lee, 2014; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Morita, 2015; Rao, 2013), such as exam-focused English learning environments (Lee, 2014), teachers' English-speaking deficiency, large class size, and insufficient class time (Butler, 2011; Moodie & Nam, 2016). As a result, the use of English in class by both teachers and students appears to be negatively influenced.

It is commonly believed that schools are preparatory steps for interaction in the larger society, and experiences at school have a life-long impact on individuals; for instance, students' English learning at school would seem to impact their certified English exam score (e.g., IELTS). Hence, it is recommended that East Asian schools help students to develop a high proficiency in English speaking by properly putting CLT into practice, where students and teachers can speak in English frequently. Since East Asia educational curriculums follow top-down

policies, it is inevitable that there is only limited space for teachers to make differences in English classes (Butler, 2011; Butler, 2015; Moodie & Nam, 2012). This indicates that East Asian policymakers should be more sensitive to clearly defining the problems of conducting CLT in English education, consider better English curriculum policies in use in other countries, and reflect them in their national curriculums in a realistic way.

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## APPENDIX B

### The Paper-Based Questionnaire

Q1

Please write your nationality. ....

Q2

Please write your first language (mother tongue). ....

Q3

In which country did you complete your primary school (i.e. Years 1-6)?

.....

Q4

In which country did you complete your high school (i.e. Year 7-12)?

.....

Q5

When did you first start learning English at school?

- Year 1 ( )
- Year 2 ( )
- Year 3 ( )
- Year 4 ( )
- Year 5 ( )
- Year 6 ( )
- Year 7 ( )
- Year 8 ( )
- Year 9 ( )
- Year 10 ( )
- Year 11 ( )
- Year 12 ( )

Q6

	Extremely competent	Moderately competent	Slightly competent	Slightly incompetent	Moderately incompetent	Extremely incompetent
How competent were <b>your English teachers</b> at spoken English (on average) at school?						

Q7

	A great deal	A lot	A little	None at all
How much did <b>you</b> speak in English in class?				
How much did <b>your English teacher</b> speak in English?				

Q8

What was your IELTS speaking band? (The latest)

- 4.5 ( )                      7 ( )
- 5 ( )                         7.5 ( )
- 5.5 ( )                      8 ( )
- 6 ( )                         8.5 ( )
- 6.5 ( )                      9 ( )

Q9

Where did you take your IELTS test?

- In your country ( )
- In another country .....

Q10

How well did it represent your speaking level?

- Extremely well ( )
- Very well ( )
- Slightly well ( )
- Not well at all ( )

Q11

How much did your previous schooling (i.e. Elementary, Middle, High School) affect your latest IELTS speaking band score?

- A great deal (    )
  - A lot (    )
  - A little (    )
  - Not at all (    )
- 

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This survey/questionnaire is to support an academic study conducted as an assignment for a postgraduate Humanities and Social Sciences Research subject. The purpose of this study is *to compare the relationship between IELTS speaking scores and students' classroom English in primary school and high school for East Asians and Western Europeans.*

You will be one of approximately 20 people participating in this survey, which is anonymous and will be used for data purposes only. You will not be asked for any personal contact information, nor will any contact be sought after you have completed the survey/questionnaire.

The information you provide will be kept confidential, retained by the researcher and destroyed on completion of the assignment. If you have any questions about the survey/questionnaire, or about the research itself, please make contact with the course coordinator Dr. Grant Sinnamon [gsinnamo@bond.edu.au](mailto:gsinnamo@bond.edu.au). The BUHREC Protocol number for this research is R01011.

Thank you.

I have read the above information and agree to participate.

Signature:

Date:

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## **Book Reviews**

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# Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice

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## Reviewed by James Kimball

*Rod Ellis, Peter Skehan, Shaofeng Li, Natuko Shintani, and Craig Lambert*

*Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press 2020.*

*Pages: 417+ xv. (ISBN-978-1-108-71389-4, Paperback)*

## INTRODUCTION

What comes to mind when you think of task-based language teaching (TBLT)? Is it a practical, effective approach to use with students in your context? Or is it a step too far, an experimental approach to teaching that lacks demonstrable effectiveness, not only in SLA literature but also in regards to your teacher's intuition about how languages are learned?

TBLT is not new. It gained an ELT foothold in 1987 (Prabhu, 1987), and even more attention with the publication of *A Framework for Task-Based Learning* (Willis, 1996) and *Doing Task-Based Teaching* (Willis & Willis, 2007), among others. For those who want an easily digestible overview of TBLT, Thornbury (2017) offers a concise overview of TBLT issues in *30 Language Teaching Methods*. While it is fair to say that communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology is part and parcel of most teachers' education and training, TBLT as classroom practice is still a hard sell. Publishers are generally apprehensive about adopting TBLT in commercial materials, favoring the tried and true grammar-based, synthetic syllabus (albeit with some communicative activities). In Cambridge CELTA courses, TBLT only merits a passing mention. And exam-focused teaching and learning tends to dominate our ELT landscape. Old habits die hard.

Regardless of which camp you fall into, *Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* is a recently published book that

champions TBLT and is worth reading. Ellis et al. make a strong case for implementing some version of TBLT in our classrooms. However, it is not a how-to resource. As a new addition to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series, it is more of a compendium of research on TBLT. Therefore, it would be of great interest to teachers engaging in action research.

## SUMMARY

There are five sections to *Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice*. In Part I, the authors provide a historical review of TBLT. A general introduction to the topic covers definitions of a task, task features, how TBLT fits into a lesson, and a discussion of TBLT critiques. Part II draws on different theoretical perspectives that underpin TBLT. The five chapters within this section (cognitive-interactionist, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, and educational) are critical for understanding the research designs that follow. Part III moves from theoretical to pedagogical concerns. Classroom issues related to task design, methodology, and task assessment are introduced. The pedagogical issues that come up are not limited to TBLT, though. Task repetition, planning time, focus-on-form(s), organization and sequencing of tasks (activities), and feedback/error correction should concern all classroom teachers regardless of methodology or approach. Part IV discusses task evaluation. It includes micro-evaluations (e.g., answers specific research questions or highlights narrow interventions), macro-evaluations (e.g., introducing TBLT as a curriculum intervention), and program evaluation in general. Finally, Part V deliberates on the role TBLT has in the future of ELT, answers common questions about TBLT, responds to critiques, and suggests areas for further research.

## EVALUATION

Where does *Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* slot into the current TBLT offerings? As a lengthy book, does it merit the effort and time needed to digest the content?

On the first question, this is a welcome addition to available TBLT

resources. Rather than being a how-to recipe book, it is an up-to-date catalog of TBLT research, with valuable summaries of published research, assessments of their value to the field, and strengths and weaknesses as vetted research. This focus should appeal to any budding researcher because it offers advice on research design, thereby planting seeds for readers to initiate their own classroom investigations. At times, the summaries and analyses are not so reader friendly. They do require some experience with reading academic prose and familiarity with ELT jargon. However, each synopsis concludes with an abridged version spelling out the main idea in simple terms. Frequent use of tables also helps to distill complex issues down to bare essentials.

Yes, the book is long. But it is one of the most highlighted and notated books that I have read in many years. It is very much worth the time to understand the different ways to examine tasks (Part II: cognitive-interactionist, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, and educational). Part of me wants to subscribe to one theory or another. But these are complementary views of the SLA process, not position statements up for debate.

Two sections stand out. The subtitle *Theory and Practice* is worth commenting on. There is a good deal of content addressed to classroom teachers in Part III (Pedagogical Perspectives) and throughout the text in general. Despite being theory-driven, praxis is never far removed from theoretical models. For example, how do teachers choose tasks, and how are they to be sequenced? What principles support the use of tasks? And how are tasks to be evaluated? These are all relevant, guiding questions for reflection and inquiry. Part V (Moving Forward) is also notable. Here the authors tackle thorny questions from TBLT critics. The lack of a concrete or substantial rebuttal is not a weakness, just a concession of where we stand with TBLT as an approach. And again, advice for your future research project is straightforward and encouraging.

*Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* is not flawless. There are a handful of typos that made it past the editorial process, which is unfortunate. Secondly, given the reputation of TBLT as a hard sell, there is an unmistakable inference or tenor throughout the text, one that hints TBLT's inferiority complex. While it was noted that TBLT is a flexible approach used with a variety of input-based tasks, nearly all of the research focused on speaking tasks requiring oral output as part of task evaluation. And finally, in the discussion about challenges and suggestions for research, TBLT issues are categorized as non-issues or

real issues. I found this unhelpful, as all issues might be of significance based on individual perspectives or circumstances.

## CONCLUSIONS

TBLT, despite a bevy of research projects supporting its use, is still not widely implemented in classrooms. PPP (present-practice-produce) is straightforward and comfortable. PPP exemplifies a typical lesson structure throughout the world. On the other hand, TBLT requires the teacher to relinquish center stage and give students the reins, which may not be culturally appropriate in specific contexts. In theory, many teachers espouse student-centered approaches to learning, but that is not so easy to do in practice. When students make (interlanguage) errors, it is natural to pivot to drilling, pattern practice, and exercises to root out those pesky mistakes. PPP is reassuring for both teachers and learners. And this typecasts TBLT as being an innovative approach.

However, *Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* makes a strong case for trialing TBLT. Yes, there is something inherently vague about TBLT. But that vague, fuzziness regarding what exactly constitutes a task is actually freedom and learner autonomy. The notion of strong and weak versions of TBLT, of a flexible task-based or task-supported approach, is appealing and accommodates teachers in various contexts. Ample SLA data supports TBLT. If you have a grasp of TBLT, a basic foundational understanding of TBLT, then *Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* is a recommended next step. For anyone doing TBLT research, this is an essential resource for a literature review. The reference section is 37 pages long, so it is comprehensive. In short, it is well organized, informative, and balances theory and practice as best it can. From a teacher development perspective, Ellis et al. have given us a lot to reflect on.

## THE REVIEWER

**James Kimball** holds an MSc in educational management in TESOL from Aston University, and his research interests include program evaluation and classroom dynamics. Taking part in teacher development activities has been a long-time interest. He is an assistant professor of English in the Liberal Arts Department

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# Appendices

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# Korea TESOL Ethical Standards for Research and Publication

## ARTICLE I. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

### Section 1. Purpose.

The Korea TESOL Ethical Standards for Research and Publication (hereafter referred to as “the Standards”), designed to promote and maintain high ethical standards concerning professional research and publication, shall provide the guidelines for the organization and operation of the Korea TESOL (hereafter, KOTESOL) Board on Research and Publication Ethics, entitled to investigate any wrongdoings against the ethical policies described in the Standards.

### Section 2. Scope of Application.

The Standards shall apply to all research related to KOTESOL, manuscripts submitted to the official scholarly publications of KOTESOL, and materials submitted to and presented at scholarly events of KOTESOL. These include the following:

1. *Korea TESOL Journal*
2. *KOTESOL Proceedings*
3. *The English Connection*
4. Korea TESOL International Conference *Extended Summaries*
5. The Korea TESOL website
6. KOTESOL event program books and website (including international, national, chapter, and SIG conferences, symposiums, and workshops)
7. KOTESOL event presentation content, either in-person or virtual (including international, national, chapter, and SIG conferences, symposiums, and workshops)

## ARTICLE II. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.

### Section 1. Ethical Principles of the Author.

- (a) The *author* (as defined in Art. VIII) shall perform faithful research.
- (b) The author shall make the research process transparent.
- (c) The author shall be open to constructive criticism of the author’s *work* (defined in Art. VIII) by *reviewers* and the *publication chief* (defined in Art. VIII).
- (d) The author shall disclose conflicts of interest and be transparent as to any entity that may be supporting or may profit from the author’s work.

- (e) The author shall not infringe on the privacy, autonomy, rights, or well-being of an individual through a procedure in execution of a work or through the outcome of a work.
- (f) The author shall not publish (*publication* defined in Art. VIII) the work of another as the author's own.
- (g) The author shall make a concerted effort to adhere to research and publication ethics set out herein.

## **Section 2. Ethical Principles and the Work.**

- (a) A work shall conform adequately to the submission requirements of the *publication* (as defined in Art. VIII).
- (b) A work shall conform adequately in contents and organization as prescribed by the publication.
- (c) A work shall demonstrate respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and well-being. This includes the use of language that is sensitive to people and places; the avoidance of deficit-centered perspectives that demean participants; weighing potential risks in relation to benefits of the work and taking steps to minimize such risks, especially when considering working with vulnerable groups; and throughout all aspects of the research, being attentive to the well-being of the participants. All work should make a positive contribution to the body of knowledge and ultimately to society.

## **Section 3. Breach of Ethical Principles**

Breaches of research and publication ethics include the following:

1. Fabrication, the act of falsely creating nonexistent data or outcomes.
2. Falsification, the distortion of content or outcomes by artificial manipulation of research materials, equipment, or processes, including selective reporting; or by arbitrary modification or deletion of data.
3. Plagiarism, the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit. This includes self-plagiarism, the appropriation of the author's earlier published ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
4. False authorship, the allocation of principal authorship or other publication credit that does not reflect, in any justifiable manner, scientific and professional contributions of an individual to a work.
5. Multiple submissions, the submission of a manuscript that has already been published, accepted for publication elsewhere, or concurrently submitted for review to another publication.

## **ARTICLE III. AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHOR OBLIGATIONS.**

### **Section 1. Acknowledgement of Sources.**

An author who submits a manuscript shall include proper acknowledgement when drawing upon the ideas, concepts, words, or research of another, including any additional information obtained during the review and proposal evaluation process.

### **Section 2. Authorship and Author Responsibility.**

An author shall have responsibility for and take credit for only the work to which they have made a substantial contribution.

### **Section 3. Authorship and Contribution Disclosure.**

- (a) An author shall clearly disclose their relevant affiliations and positions.
- (b) In the case of a submitted work with multiple authors, all contributing authors shall be disclosed.
- (c) Authors shall be listed in a descending order of the contribution made to the work. Each author shall be able to clearly justify their role and contribution to the work.
- (d) No individual shall be credited with authorship without making a contribution to the work.

### **Section 4. Submission of Manuscript.**

An author shall not be permitted to submit a manuscript for review that has already been published elsewhere, that has been accepted for publication elsewhere, or is being reviewed for possible publication elsewhere. If a case of multiple submission occurs, the author shall notify the KOTESOL publication(s) to investigate the acceptability/unacceptability of the multiple submission.

### **Section 5. Revision of Manuscript.**

An author shall strive to revise their submitted manuscript in accordance with the feedback and suggestions provided by the *reviewer* (defined in Art. VIII) and *publication chief* (defined in Article VIII) during the review and editing process. This includes revisions in accordance with the publication's style guidelines. If an author disagrees with a requested revision, they shall provide in writing relevant evidence and justification for not making the requested revision, which shall then be taken into consideration by the publication chief prior to a final decision regarding acceptance.

## ARTICLE IV. EDITORIAL PANEL OBLIGATIONS.

- Section 1.** An *editorial panel* (defined in Art. VIII) makes decisions regarding the publication of a submitted work. In the decision-making process, each member of the editorial panel shall respect the integrity of each other member as a professional educator, scholar, and/or researcher.
- Section 2.** An editorial panel shall review fairly the quality of a submitted work and whether it complies with the submission guidelines and review criteria. Submitted works shall be evaluated objectively without regard to affiliation, age, gender, and other personal characteristics of the author.
- Section 3.** In order to give each submitted work due opportunity to be reviewed and evaluated objectively, the publication chief shall ensure that the reviewer(s) of a work shall have suitable expertise in the area covered by the work, shall be able to make fair and unbiased decisions, and shall not have any conflict of interest with the work or author.
- Section 4.** The publication chief shall ensure that neither the contents of a submitted work nor the identity of its author be disclosed during the review process to anyone outside that review process. In the case of a blind review publication, the identity of an author shall, in addition, not be disclosed to the reviewer(s).

## ARTICLE V. REVIEWER OBLIGATIONS.

- Section 1.** A reviewer, upon accepting a review request by the publication chief, shall follow the guidelines set forth for review of the work, including the ethical principles described in Articles II and III; complete the review within the designated time frame; and submit the review results to the publication chief.
- Section 2.** A reviewer shall review a work independently, fairly, and objectively. The reviewer shall explain and support their judgements adequately in the review report made to the publication chief in such a manner so as the basis of the comments may be clearly understood.
- Section 3.** (a) If the reviewer feels inadequately qualified to fairly and objectively conduct a review of the assigned work, the reviewer shall notify the publication chief of their withdrawal from the review

process for the work in question.

- (b) If a reviewer detects a possible conflict of interest of any type between the reviewer and either the author or their work, the reviewer shall notify the publication chief of the reviewer's withdrawal from the review process for the work in question.

**Section 4.** In the review of a work, a reviewer shall respect the author's integrity as a scholar and professional, and respect their right to do independent research.

**Section 5.** A reviewer shall treat a work for review with the utmost confidentiality. The reviewer shall not disclose any information about the work under review or discuss its contents with a third party during the review process, which culminates with notification of review results to the author.

## **ARTICLE VI. THE BOARD ON RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION ETHICS (BORPE).**

### **Section 1. Organization.**

- (a) KOTESOL shall establish a Board on Research and Publication Ethics (hereinafter, BORPE) whose duty shall be to oversee matters (that are in KOTESOL's national scope) related to ethical standards.
- (b) The BORPE shall be composed of four (4) permanent members: the Publications Committee chair, the Research Committee chair, the Diversity Committee chair, and the *Korea TESOL Journal* editor-in-chief. When the BORPE is convened to consider a case, up to three (3) additional members may be appointed by the BORPE chair on an ad hoc basis for the duration of the proceedings.
- (c) The Publications Committee chair shall serve as the BORPE chair, and the BORPE chair's term of office shall correspond with that of the Publication Committee chair's term of office.
- (d) Entities within KOTESOL that are not explicitly managed or facilitated by a national committee, such as chapters and SIGs (special interest groups), may establish their own boards to oversee, investigate, and deliberate matters related to research and publication ethics in the spirit of the standards set forth herein.

### **Section 2. Duties.**

The BORPE shall deliberate matters related to research and publication ethics, including administrative affairs related to the implementation and revision

of the Standards, and investigate possible violations of the Standards. In the case where the BORPE determines that a violation has been committed, the BORPE shall recommend an appropriate response to correct the violation; if sanctions against the violator are suggested, the sanctions shall be presented to the National Council for approval.

### **Section 3. Meetings and Operation.**

- (a) Meetings shall be convened, either in-person or virtually, as deemed necessary by the Chair or when requested by the KOTESOL President.
- (b) A majority of the BORPE members shall constitute a quorum for a meeting. A decision of the BORPE shall be considered valid with the concurrence of a majority of the members present at the meeting. But a BORPE member involved as an author of the work under investigation shall not be permitted to participate in the meeting as a BORPE member.
- (c) The meeting shall be held in a closed-door session. The author suspected of misconduct shall be asked to appear at the BORPE meeting if the BORPE deems it to be necessary.
- (d) When resolution of a case appears relatively simple and thus does not appear to require intense discussion and deliberation, opinions and suggestions of the BORPE members may be rendered in writing (e.g., via email) when so requested by the Chair, and in lieu of an in-person or virtual meeting. A final written resolution shall be based on the written opinions and suggestions of the BORPE members.

### **Section 4. Author's Obligation to Cooperation.**

An author suspected of a breach of the Standards shall be obliged to cooperate fully and faithfully with the BORPE in its investigation into that possible breach of the Standards. The author's cooperation shall include, but not be limited to, submission of requested documents and appearing before the BORPE (virtually, if necessary) if called upon to do so.

### **Section 5. Investigation of Misconduct Allegations.**

- (a) If there is an allegation of a possible violation of the research and publication ethics as set forth herein, the BORPE shall begin an investigation as expeditiously as possible and give the author ample opportunity to respond to allegations within a time period set at up to three (3) months from the date of notification to the author.
- (b) The BORPE shall have the right to request that the author provide ample clarification with respect to alleged misconduct or violations of research and publication ethics.
- (c) The BORPE shall scrutinize the author's clarifications and judge if the

- author's provided clarifications are satisfactory. If they are not deemed satisfactory, the BORPE shall ask for further information in order to make a proper judgement with respect to the allegations.
- (d) The BORPE shall conduct investigation of misconduct and violation of research and publication ethics in accordance with the procedures set forth by COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) in its guidelines for journals and publishers (<https://publicationethics.org/>).
  - (e) The BORPE shall finalize any investigation and review as expeditiously as possible within a period of not more than six (6) months.
  - (f) The BORPE shall not disclose the identity of an author or informant involved in an allegation of misconduct until a final decision has been made in the matter. But, the sharing of information shall be allowed if
    - (i) there is no response from the author,
    - (ii) the response from the author is inadequate as determined by the BORPE chair,
    - (iii) more than one publication is thought to be affected,
    - (iv) disclosure of such information is necessary to enact the resolution recommended by the BORPE (see, e.g., Section 6(d)).
  - (g) The BORPE shall report to the President their findings in an investigation of allegations of misconduct along with a description of their rationale and dissenting arguments, and any suggested resolution or remedy to be imposed on the violator(s).

## Section 6. Punitive Action

- (a) In a case where the BORPE recommends a punitive action of light severity, the President may decide to accept and implement the punitive action or bring it before the National Council for consideration.
- (b) In a case where the BORPE recommends a punitive action of considerable severity, the President shall bring it before the National Council for consideration.
- (c) In a case brought before the National Council, the Council, taking the recommendations of the BORPE into consideration, is the final arbiter of the matter, determining an appropriate response by a simple majority vote of the Council members present.
- (d) The President shall be able to take punitive action ranging from a warning to suspension or revocation of KOTESOL membership of an author found to be in violation of the Standards as set forth herein. The President shall also have the right to notify other organizations or individuals of the punitive action taken. A typical example of a punitive action would be the following: If misconduct is proven, a manuscript already accepted for publication in the *Korea TESOL Journal* shall be rejected, and in the case where the research is already published in the *Korea TESOL Journal*, the research shall be removed (in the case of

digital publication) or notification shall be made of cancellation of the research (in the case of print publication). The author of the research shall not be allowed to make a submission to the Journal for three (3) years following the punitive action.

## **ARTICLE VII. COPYRIGHT.**

**Section 1.** A KOTESOL publication may protect its published material with a copyright, a statement of which is conspicuously displayed within the published material.

**Section 2.** A KOTESOL publication may enter into a copyright agreement with the author of a work to be published by the publication, an agreement in which both parties are bound to uphold the conditions of the agreement.

**Section 3a.** In case a dispute should arise between a KOTESOL publication and an author who have entered into a copyright agreement, the onus is on the publication and author to resolve the dispute.

**Section 3b.** If however a satisfactory resolution to the copyright agreement dispute cannot be reached by the publication and the author, the case may be brought before the BORPE for resolution following the procedure set forth in Article VI.

## **ARTICLE VIII. PROMOTION OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION ETHICS.**

KOTESOL shall make a concerted effort to make conspicuously available not only these Standards but also materials that an author may use prior to submission of a work to aid in ensuring that research and publication ethics are not breached.

## **ARTICLE IX. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS.**

Terms used in this document shall be defined as follows:

1. *Author* shall refer to any individual(s) submitting a manuscript for review to a KOTESOL publication, submitting a proposal for review for an oral presentation, and/or making an oral academic presentation.

2. *Work* shall refer to any manuscript submitted for review/evaluation, any summary or abstract submitted for review/evaluation, any proposal submitted for review/evaluation, or any oral academic presentation and their accompanying materials.
3. *Publication* shall refer to any listed item in Article I, Section 2.
4. *Editorial panel* shall refer to the individual(s) designated by a publication to render a decision on acceptance/rejection of a work for publication.
5. *Publication chief* shall refer to the individual of a publication holding the topmost decision-making powers.
6. *Reviewer* shall refer to any individual(s) selected by a publication chief to evaluate the quality of a work.

## **ARTICLE X. AMENDMENT OF THE STANDARDS.**

The Standards may be amended in accordance with protocol set forth for amendment of the KOTESOL Policy and Procedures Manual.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS.**

- These Standards shall take effect as of May 24, 2020.
- Amended September 27, 2020, by the Korea TESOL National Council.



## Korea TESOL Journal General Information for Contributors

As an academic journal in the field of English language teaching (ELT), the *Korea TESOL Journal* welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Submissions should be of practical import, dealing with aspects of the Korean ELT context or directly applicable to it. As a journal that is dedicated to the nurturing of research among ELT practitioners, the Journal also welcomes quality submissions from the early-career researcher.

The *Korea TESOL Journal* invites submissions in three categories:

- 1. Full-Length Articles.** Contributors are strongly encouraged to submit manuscripts of 5,000 to 8,000 words in length, including references, tables, etc.
- 2. Brief Reports.** The Journal also invites short reports (approximately 2,500 words). These manuscripts may present preliminary findings, focus on some aspect of a larger study, or summarize research done in the pursuit of advanced studies.
- 3. Reviews.** The Journal invites succinct, evaluative reviews of scholarly or professional books, or instructional-support resources (such as computer software, video or audio material, and tests). Reviews should provide a descriptive and evaluative summary and a brief discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice. Submissions should generally be 800–12,000 words in length.

Manuscripts are accepted for peer review with the understanding that the same work has not been submitted elsewhere (i.e., not pending review or currently under review) and has not been previously published, online or in print.

Manuscripts should follow APA style guidelines (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.), especially for in-text citations, references, tables, and figures. Submissions should be made with tables, figures, and other graphics included in the manuscript text (and upon request, as separate files). All figures should be created in black and white, and graphs must display distinctive shades or patterning for readability. Manuscripts should be submitted as MS Word (DOC or DOCx) files.

The *Korea TESOL Journal* accepts submissions for two issues annually.

**Korea TESOL Journal, Vol. 17, No. 1**

Inquiries/manuscripts to: [journal@koreatesol.org](mailto:journal@koreatesol.org)

For more information on submissions to the *Korea TESOL Journal*, including paper submission deadlines, evaluation criteria, and manuscript formatting requirements, visit:

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