

# Korea TESOL Journal

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Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages



# **Korea TESOL Journal**

Volume 21, Number 2



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# Korea TESOL Journal

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Volume 21, Number 2

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Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
(Korea TESOL / KOTESOL)

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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The *Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language.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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# 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 professional 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 over 10,000 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 (the 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 (Malaysia), TEFLIN (Indonesia), CamTESOL (Cambodia), ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL, MAAL (Macau), HAAL (Hong Kong), ELTAI (India), BELTA (Bangladesh), NELTA (Nepal), and most recently with SPELT (Pakistan). Korea TESOL also has partnership arrangements with numerous domestic ELT associations.

The membership of Korea TESOL includes pre-school, 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 eight active chapters across the nation. Members of Korea TESOL are from all areas of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a diverse, inclusive, and 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, Young Learners and Teens, Classroom Practice, M-CALL, Social Justice, Christian Teachers, Research, Well-Being and Professional Development – which hold their own meetings and events.

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# **Research Papers**

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# **Navigating Identity and Authority: Korean Students' Voices in Multilingual Negotiation**

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**Emmy J. Min, Qing Sun, and Kaden Kwak**

*University of Southern California, Los Angeles, United States*

This qualitative study explores how Korean high school students use English, Korean, and Konglish to negotiate authority and construct identity in an English-medium extracurricular research project. Drawing on qualitative methods, the research team examines how language use shifts in response to formal and informal contexts, peer interaction, and institutional expectations. The findings reveal that English is often associated with professionalism while Korean reinforces traditional hierarchies through its honorifics system. Konglish emerges as a flexible, culturally embedded practice that mediates between global and local identities. Data collected through classroom observation, interviews, online reflections, and student writing show that language use is a strategic, context-sensitive act tied to authority, identity, and moral orders within the school. This study calls for a nuanced understanding of language as social practice, challenging typologies of Englishes and emphasizing students' agency in navigating multilingual settings.

**Keywords:** Konglish, identity, translanguaging, code-switching, authority

## **INTRODUCTION**

In South Korea, English proficiency is widely regarded as a marker of academic excellence, global citizenship, and social prestige (Choi, 2020). English education occupies a prominent place in the national curriculum and in the aspirations of students and their families, shaping not only how students learn but also how they come to understand themselves and their place in the world (Song, 2011). Within this context, language is not merely a neutral medium of communication – it becomes a site of identity negotiation, social alignment, and the performance of authority. Language is a form of social action (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 1999) and authority as a relational construct that emerges through interaction (Pace & Hemmings, 2006). By analyzing how students shift between languages depending on audience, topic, and mode of communication, I show how authority is co-constructed in everyday educational encounters. The study also builds on previous work that highlights the influence of various social factors on identity development (Pavlenko, 2002), especially in contexts marked by linguistic hierarchy and cultural ambivalence.

This study investigates how authority is enacted and negotiated through the language practices of Korean high school students participating in an extracurricular online research project.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on classroom observations, interviews, and analysis of student-produced texts and online interactions, I explore how students' choices to use English, Korean, or Konglish (a Koreanized hybrid of English) reflect and construct their understandings of social hierarchy, legitimacy, and identity. The study is grounded in the sociolinguistic premise that language use is always shaped by the broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it occurs. By paying attention to students' nuanced language choices across different modes of interaction – essays, group meetings, online reflections – I aim to uncover how these choices are shaped by, and in turn shape, authority relations in educational spaces.

The study is set in a private international-track high school in South Korea, where students are encouraged to use English as their primary language of communication. The school promotes an English-only policy and emphasizes global leadership, creativity, and autonomy as part of its educational vision. Yet beneath these institutional ideals lies a more tacit and often contradictory moral order, one shaped by the competitive pressures of college admissions, especially to elite U.S. universities. These conflicting expectations create a complex social terrain in which students must navigate not only linguistic performance but also the social meanings attached to language choice. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how students in linguistically and culturally complex environments navigate institutional expectations while also carving out spaces for authenticity, resistance, and relational belonging. By centering student voices and examining their language practices across different modalities, this study invites educators and researchers to consider how authority is not imposed from above but continually shaped through everyday acts of speaking, writing, and relating.

In addition to examining students' motivations, this study investigates how they use English, Korean, and Konglish in their written reflections and peer interactions. Language choice was not simply a matter of linguistic competence but a means of negotiating status, expressing alignment or resistance, and asserting one's identity (Pavlenko, 2002). English was often associated with professionalism and formality, while Korean was linked to emotional intimacy and group solidarity. Konglish emerged both as an unconscious byproduct of bilingualism and as a deliberate stylistic tool, blurring the boundaries between languages and signaling cultural hybridity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Authority in educational contexts has traditionally been viewed as hierarchical, flowing from teachers to students in line with institutional power. However, recent scholarship has emphasized a more nuanced and relational view. Pace and Hemmings (2006) conceptualize authority as a negotiated process: "a relationship of command and consent based on the legitimacy of those who lead and the voluntary obedience of those who follow" (p. 3). Within this framework, authority is constructed

through everyday classroom practices (Pirrie & Rafanell, 2020), not simply imposed by institutional position.

Bourdieu (1991) further complicates this by arguing that language itself is imbued with symbolic power. Words and utterances are not only communicative acts but also signs of authority meant to be believed and obeyed. The legitimacy of a speaker – and the language they use – is always contextual, shaped by broader social and institutional structures. In educational settings, students are expected to align their discourse with institutional expectations, often reproducing dominant ideologies in the process.

South Korea offers a particularly fertile ground for examining the intersection of language, identity, and authority. English holds immense symbolic and material value in Korean society, often linked to social mobility, global competence, and academic success (Piller & Cho, 2013; Rüdiger, 2018). Scholars such as Krashen (2003) have described the phenomenon of “English fever,” in which English language acquisition becomes a national obsession fueled by the demands of globalization and neoliberal competitiveness.

At the same time, Korean society maintains a deeply rooted hierarchy based on age, gender, and status, reflected in its language through the *jondaemal* (honorifics) system. Deuchler (1980) traces this system to Confucian values embedded in the concept of *ye* (ritual propriety), which defines expected behavior according to one’s place in the social hierarchy. In Korean, linguistic choices signal one’s deference to authority and play a crucial role in maintaining social order. Jeon (2004) elaborates on how Korean honorifics function not merely as politeness markers but as ideological tools that reproduce social stratification. For younger speakers, especially students, using *jondaemal* is not optional but obligatory, perhaps reinforcing their subordinate position in relation to teachers, elders, and even slightly older peers. This creates a unique tension when students shift between Korean and English, particularly in educational spaces that emphasize Western-style egalitarianism while remaining rooted in Korean cultural norms.

At this intersection, Pennycook’s (2009) three-dimensional (3D) transtextual model of English use offers a valuable framework for understanding how language, identity, and authority are dynamically negotiated in such contexts. His model moves beyond nation-based or static conceptions of language by emphasizing three interrelated dimensions: interlingual resources, contextual variation, and social positioning. For Korean students, navigating interactions often involves drawing on multiple linguistic resources such as honorific Korean, global English, and hybrid forms like Konglish shaped by local and transnational norms. These are not merely tools for communication but modes of positioning within hierarchies of power and meaning (Park, 2021). Within this framework, language becomes a site of transidiomatic practice (Jacquemet, 2005), where learners are not just acquiring English but also negotiating cultural expectations, symbolic capital, and their place within shifting educational and social landscapes.

## **METHOD**

This qualitative study was conducted over a period of three months at a private college preparatory high school in South Korea. The research focused on approximately 15 students enrolled in the school's international track, all of whom were learning English as a foreign language under an enforced English-only policy. Data collection included student essays, face-to-face interactions, and online reflections. The online reflections were shared through a private webpage developed by the research team. Access to the webpage was restricted to the researchers and the study participants. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' language experiences and identity negotiation within this English-medium learning environment. These multiple sources allowed for a rich understanding of students' linguistic practices and perspectives.

## **RESULTS**

Analysis of student essays, face-to-face interactions, online reflections, and interviews revealed three recurring themes in how students used language to negotiate authority. First, English was often used to mitigate hierarchical relationships embedded in Korean social structures. Second, students viewed English as the preferred language for formal and academic communication, aligning with institutional expectations. Third, in informal and social contexts, students often reverted to Korean or incorporated Konglish, both as a source of humor and to foster peer solidarity. These patterns demonstrate how students strategically chose their language based on context, audience, and their desire to project specific identities or manage authority dynamics.

### **Theme 1: English as a Tool to Elevate Subordinate Status**

Many students expressed that speaking English allowed them to feel more equal when engaging with older individuals. Korean honorifics, particularly *jondaemal*, require the speaker to acknowledge and reinforce hierarchical roles, which students found restrictive. In contrast, English offered what they described as a flatter social dynamic, allowing them to feel more comfortable or autonomous. In one reflection, Ho Jae explained,

One of the main differences from when I speak in English and when I speak in Korean is that it gives me a sense of equality with an older person. For example, in Korean, there are two ways of greeting someone, and they depend on the age of the person you are speaking with. But in English, there may be multiple ways to say hi, but they do not usually depend on the age of the other person. This may be stretching it a bit, but by speaking English, it reduces the emotional distance during a certain conversation. Of course, an exception to this case is when I speak in English with a Korean person, then

it just feels awkward. I just can't feel the type of connection that is achieved when I speak in English to an American.

Similarly, Young Ho wrote, "The Korean *jondaemal* system ... gives me great discomfort when I am talking to seniors and makes it difficult for me to communicate and be myself." This sentiment was echoed across several reflections, including Woo Suk, who noted that he preferred to use Korean only with peers, acknowledging that Korean inherently framed him as subordinate when speaking to elders. For Eun Song, the honorific system imposed a power imbalance that made her feel "as if I should be obeying everything he says."

These examples reveal how students viewed Korean language structures as not only linguistic tools but as carriers of embedded authority. English, in contrast, was perceived to bypass these hierarchical codes. However, this liberation had limits. Students acknowledged that using English with other Koreans did not always produce the same flattening effect. For example, Ho Jae noted,

This may be stretching it a bit, but by speaking English, it reduces the emotional distance during a certain conversation. Of course, an exception to this case is when I speak in English with a Korean person, then it just feels awkward. I just can't feel the type of connection that is achieved when I speak in English to an American.

Ki Hyun echoed this, arguing that equality is not simply tied to the language itself but to "the way they [interlocutors] speak and respect me as an equal." These reflections show that while English provided a discursive space for perceived equality, its success depended on the interlocutor's cultural frame. Even in English, Korean norms of hierarchy could persist, suggesting that language alone does not dismantle deeply embedded social scripts, but it merely provides an opening for reconfiguring them.

## **Theme 2: English as a Language of Formality and Professionalism**

Students also reported using English when they needed to appear serious, intelligent, or professional, particularly in academic or public contexts. Many noted that English conveyed formality more effectively than Korean, even though Korean was their first language. This preference appeared to stem from how English was used and taught in their school, where English was the medium for academic writing, presentations, and structured debate. For example, Ho Jae wrote, "It [English] has a much more professional feel to it. For others who are more familiar with using Korean perhaps feel an air of professionalism when using Korean. But for me, it's English." Bong Ho provided a particularly vivid example. He said,

Well, of course, it would be absurd if I spoke with Mr. Smith in Korean. But putting such obvious cases aside, even when talking with Korean teachers, in some cases, English is preferred. For example, when I am talking with Ms. Lee, it is more natural if we spoke in English.

His surprise at Ms. Lee's use of Korean – even in a private setting – reveals how tightly English was linked with authority and professional interactions. Students internalized English as the expected register for formal communication, even within otherwise Korean-speaking relationships. For example, Han Jin added, “I usually become very formal and gentleman-like when using English. ... I sometimes unconsciously apply [formal writing] rules when speaking English as well.” In these accounts, the line between academic English and spoken English blurred. Students often applied the formal norms taught in writing – avoid contractions, avoid slang – to their spoken English, even in casual situations. This reinforced the idea that English was not just a language but a performance of a particular kind of student: polite, articulate, and intelligent. However, this internalization came at a cost. Some students, like Bong Ho, admitted they had little experience expressing themselves formally in Korean. This academic imbalance, though unacknowledged by many teachers, limited their ability to project professionalism in their native language. Moreover, students reported occasional anxiety or hesitation around Konglish, which emerged in formal writing or discussions. Byul reflected,

I try not to use Konglish but ... I sometimes forget that it is not a correct phrase. Words such as *fighting* and *handphone* are so natural. ... I sometimes forget that it is actually not a correct phrase.

In addition, Woo Suk added, “Sometimes my knowledge of English just so ... utterly fails me that I don't even know that what I'm using is Konglish.” Despite their formal training in English, students still grappled with the informal, hybridized nature of English in their environment. In so doing, Konglish words that were normalized locally but carried stigma in academic or global settings. This tension further highlights how linguistic authority is deeply contextual and socially mediated.

### **Theme 3: Korean and Konglish in Informal Contexts and Peer Culture**

In contrast to the formal and hierarchical associations of English, Korean was most frequently used in informal settings, with friends, or during moments of humor. Students reported feeling more emotionally expressive and playful in Korean by being able to make jokes, use slang, and convey a fuller range of their personalities. June wrote, “When I use Korean, I can play with the words and make new words ... it is hard for me to play with English when teasing somebody. ... I can become joyful and hilarious when I speak in Korean.” This reflects Korean's role as a language of intimacy and spontaneity. Although students valued English for its professional utility, Korean offered familiarity and flexibility. Even in informal interactions, English often felt too rigid or emotionally distant. Some students also used Konglish as a way to create humor or establish group identity. June, for example, shared a playful example using a store sign photo that merged English and Korean phonetics to mimic the phrase “Oh my God.” He wrote, “I often use Konglish when I hang around with friends from other schools. ... I often use Konglish for fun. It can be anything such as *handphone* or *cunning* [cheating on a test].”

Other students described Korean swearing and slang as central to male peer bonding. Woo Suk reflected, “Swearing at others is reserved solely for Korean. ... I simply don’t have enough experience of swearing in English.” Also, Chulsoo added, “The wild usage of words strengthens the manliness of language among boys.” Here, Korean is not just a language of emotion – it is a marker of masculinity and social belonging. English, associated with formality and academic authority, was less suitable for expressing irreverence or forming tight-knit peer connections. These dynamics reinforce the view that students were deeply aware of how language choices signaled not just meaning but relational positioning.

Several student reflections emphasized that Korean offered more freedom and ease in expressing humor and playfulness. June explained that Korean allowed him to engage in wordplay and invent new expressions, something he found challenging in English due to his limited exposure to the language’s informal registers. He noted that because he had not spent extensive time in the United States, he was unfamiliar with the full range of English, including its slang, jokes, and idiomatic expressions. As a result, he found it difficult to be humorous or teasing in English and often came across as more serious than he intended. In contrast, speaking in Korean enabled him to adopt a more lighthearted tone, and he felt more joyful, relaxed, and expressive in that language. He also reflected that Korean, as his mother tongue, allowed him to articulate his thoughts more clearly and reveal deeper aspects of his personality. In this sense, his language choice was not just about linguistic proficiency but also about the emotional and social identities he could perform in each language.

Finally, several students noted that their language use was highly dependent on who they were speaking to. Binee and June both mentioned that they were more likely to speak English with close friends from the international track but would switch to Korean when others joined the conversation. This selective switching demonstrates how students used language not only to communicate but to manage their social image and comfort level depending on the audience.

## **Summary of Findings**

Divergent responses from students in this study point to the performative nature of language and motivation, shaped by context, audience, and perceived power relations. Such moments reveal how students adapt their discourse to align with what they perceive to be the expectations of authority figures or peers, offering insights into the dynamic nature of student voice. Across all data sources, students used English, Korean, and Konglish in strategic and context-specific ways. English was most often used to gain discursive authority, especially in formal and academic contexts. Korean was the preferred language for expressing humor, friendship, and emotional nuance, and it also carried hierarchical meanings through the use of honorifics. Konglish occupied a liminal space, sometimes viewed as a linguistic shortcoming, other times embraced as a playful or practical mode of expression. Through these choices, students navigated overlapping authority structures: institutional expectations, cultural norms, and peer relationships. Their reflections suggest that language functioned not

simply as a code but as a flexible resource for negotiating who they were, what they valued, and how they wished to be seen.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study explored how Korean high school students in an English-medium research project used language – English, Korean, and Konglish – as a tool for negotiating authority and constructing identity. The findings revealed that students' language choices were not simply about proficiency or habit but about performing social roles, responding to institutional expectations, and navigating cultural norms. In the case of the high school studied here, the school's English-only policy reflects a broader ideological commitment to global education and academic excellence. Yet, as this study reveals, students' actual language practices do not always align with institutional prescriptions. They navigate these contradictions by deploying English, Korean, or Konglish strategically, depending on context, audience, and relational dynamics.

### **Negotiating Authority Through Language**

One of the most significant patterns across the data was the students' perception of English as a tool for equalizing hierarchical relationships. This supports Bourdieu's (1991) notion that language carries symbolic power. When the students used English, they accessed a discursive space where age-based and role-based hierarchies could be temporarily suspended. By contrast, Korean – particularly through its honorific system – reinforced existing social structures, requiring students to acknowledge their lower status in relation to older interlocutors or teachers. However, the liberating power of English was limited. As students like Ho Jae reflected, speaking English with other Koreans often failed to dissolve the cultural scripts embedded in their interactions. The authority structures persisted, even when the language changed. This highlights that language alone cannot fully dismantle deeply internalized social hierarchies. Rather, the students' use of English functioned as a strategic adaptation, what Heller (1999) might call a "linguistic maneuver," to reframe authority in particular contexts without directly challenging the underlying cultural norms.

### **English as a Language of Institutional Alignment**

The use of English to convey formality and professionalism reflects the institutional values of the school. English was not only the medium of instruction but also a symbol of global competence and academic legitimacy. The students used English when writing reflections, conducting debates, and engaging in formal tasks because it aligned with the school's image of success. As Bong Ho pointed out, using English with teachers, including Korean teachers, felt more "natural" in professional settings.

This institutionalization of English as the formal register parallels what Park (2021) described as the symbolic status of English in South Korea's globalized education landscape. English becomes more than a second language; it becomes a way of performing one's readiness for global citizenship, as defined by Western-oriented academic norms. However, the consequence is a partial marginalization of students' native linguistic identities. Some, like Bong Ho, even reported limited training in formal Korean, raising questions about how multilingual schooling may privilege one discourse at the expense of another. In this way, English functioned as a gatekeeping tool, not only for external outcomes like college admission but also for internal identity work. Speaking English was often tied to appearing mature, intelligent, or accomplished. These experiences illustrate how language becomes inseparable from how students perceive their roles within the institutional hierarchy.

### **Korean and Konglish as Languages of Relational Belonging**

In contrast to the formal and hierarchical functions of English, Korean, and Konglish offered students a way to express emotional intimacy, humor, and solidarity. For students like June, Korean was the language of playfulness, swearing, and teasing, activities deeply tied to peer culture and social bonding. This aligns with Stapleton's (2003) study, which found that the use of expletives and informal speech played a key role in constructing group identity and gendered norms.

Konglish emerged as a site of both tension and creativity. Some students saw it as a linguistic failure, reflecting confusion or lack of vocabulary. Others used it deliberately, especially in informal or humorous settings. Konglish represents a fascinating site of hybridity. While often dismissed as "incorrect" or nonstandard English, Konglish functions as a meaningful cultural practice. Park (2021) argues that Konglish is not simply a linguistic error or a degraded form of English, but a reflection of how English is locally adapted, reimagined, and woven into Korean identity. Rather than viewing Konglish as a deficit, Park frames it as an example of how global languages are indigenized to fit specific sociocultural realities. In the context of this study, students' use of Konglish – both deliberate and unconscious – reveals their negotiation of linguistic authority and cultural belonging. Whether employed for humor, solidarity, or necessity, Konglish becomes a strategic resource through which students assert their agency and navigate the expectations of both local and global discourses. By blending English and Korean, students used Konglish to mediate between global and local identities.

While earlier frameworks categorized English varieties into fixed typologies such as ESL vs. EFL or the inner/outer/expanding circles model, these approaches often fail to capture the complexities of English use in contexts like South Korea. Pennycook's (2009) 3D transtextual model of English use offers an alternative perspective, viewing language not as static "varieties" but as dynamic interactions among interlingual resources, situated contexts, and ideological positions of speakers. Thus, classifying Konglish as a singular variety overlooks its fluidity and the ways it is continually negotiated in daily social interactions. Park (2021) critiqued these

traditional models, arguing that English in Korea should not be viewed as a distinct variety but as a cultural and communicative practice embedded in everyday social life. Despite South Korea's monolingual language policy and the dominance of Korean in daily interactions, English, and especially localized forms such as Konglish, permeates communication in nuanced ways. Rather than treating Konglish as a flawed or pejorative version of English, Park frames it as a resource-rich, adaptive practice through which speakers negotiate their place in a globalized world. This perspective challenges the boundaries of what counts as "legitimate" English and calls for a shift from variety-based models to practice-oriented analyses. In this study, students' use of Konglish reflects not linguistic deficiency but creative, culturally situated acts of identity-making and authority negotiation.

The fact that Konglish is both embraced and stigmatized (Rüdiger, 2018) underscores the contradictions students must navigate. Within their school, where academic English is privileged, Konglish might seem illegitimate or inappropriate. Yet outside of school or among peers, it signals relatability and cultural fluency. This duality demonstrates how students juggle multiple moral orders, balancing public expectations of formality and global competence with tacit expectations of authenticity and connection with peers.

In her ethnographic study of a group of friends in a small Irish town, Stapleton (2003) found that participants most commonly used swear words for relational and interactional purposes. Both men and women regularly used expletives during their twice-weekly social gatherings, which involved drinking and casual conversation. Swearing appeared to serve two primary relational functions: first, to position oneself as part of the group and foster solidarity, and second, to reinforce the group's shared culture and norms. Applying this to the current study, the boys' use of swear words can be seen as a way to build camaraderie and align themselves with their peer group. While English was typically reserved for more serious or formal communication, Korean allowed for expressions of solidarity and participation in the informal, playful aspects of "boy culture."

## **Implications for Language Education**

These findings have important implications for educators and policymakers. First, they suggest that language instruction should acknowledge not only the formal uses of English but also the social realities of multilingualism. Students are not just learning to write essays or give presentations; they are learning how to perform identities, manage authority, and participate in multiple moral orders. Schools that promote English as a global language must be aware of how this shapes students' self-perception and language ideologies. This study highlights the important role language plays in shaping authority dynamics. The way individuals use language can serve as a powerful tool for negotiating authority, particularly in contexts where they may otherwise occupy marginalized positions. Adopting a new language offers opportunities to redefine relationships of power and, in some cases, shift the perceived status of the speaker. These shifts are not only momentary but may also influence

learners' broader social trajectories and sense of agency. Therefore, examining authority within English language learning environments requires attention to how both the target language and the speakers' native language are positioned socially and symbolically. Rather than viewing language as a neutral means of communication, this study underscores that language carries embedded values and meanings. These meanings can either reinforce existing hierarchies or provide speakers with new forms of empowerment and participation.

Second, this study shows the importance of giving students more spaces where they can reflect on and share their language practices. The online platform used in this study allowed students to express views they might not have shared in a classroom setting. Encouraging metalinguistic reflection, especially in digital, low-stakes environments, can offer rich insights into how students experience the pressures and possibilities of bilingual education.

Finally, this research calls for a broader recognition of hybrid forms like Konglish as legitimate linguistic resources. As Park (2021) argued, research on global English should move beyond typologies and attend to language as practice. For educators, this means moving away from viewing Konglish as an error and instead engaging students in conversations about how and why they code-switch, mix, and adapt language in contextually meaningful ways.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined how Korean high school students in an English-medium extracurricular research project used English, Korean, and Konglish to negotiate authority, construct identity, and respond to institutional expectations. These findings show that students are not passive users of language; they are strategic and reflective, drawing on their linguistic repertoires to navigate multiple and sometimes competing moral orders. Authority was not fixed but fluid, shaped by the language used, the context of interaction, and the relationship between speakers. Students revealed a sharp awareness of how different audiences and settings shaped what could be said and how it could be said. This awareness guided their choices to use English to appear serious or competent, Korean to express closeness or emotion, and Konglish to creatively blend identities or ease communication. Ultimately, this research highlights that authority in language learning is not merely taught or imposed, but it is negotiated, embodied, and continuously reshaped by students themselves. Future research could explore similar dynamics in different types of schools, including public or rural settings, or among students with more limited English proficiency. Longitudinal studies might also investigate how these language practices evolve as students move from high school to university or the workforce.

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While this paper is co-authored, the data were collected by the first author, who served as the primary researcher and interviewer during the study. Therefore, the first-person singular pronoun ("I") is used in sections where the data collection process and fieldwork experiences are described.

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# Social Constructivist Professional Development to Enhance Language Teachers Self-Reflection Tendencies

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This explanatory mixed-methods action research explores how a social constructivist professional development (PD) program influences the self-reflection of foreign language teachers. Traditional PD often fails to enhance teacher reflection due to its one-size-fits-all approach and lack of integration into daily practice. This study aimed to support teachers in embedding reflective practices into their routines using a PD program adapted from Hall and Simeral (2015), designed to initial self-reflection tendencies. Eleven teachers participated in the study. Data included pre- and post-surveys and reflective journals, analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Results indicated increased self-reflection tendencies and frequency of reflection for nine participants, with two showing declines. The study informed an action plan emphasizing the roles of supervisors and trainers as servant leaders and capacity builders.

**Keywords:** professional development, reflective teaching, self-assessment, social constructivism

## INTRODUCTION

Learning is fundamentally experiential, and teaching is no exception; educators grow professionally through both practice and reflective inquiry. Central to this growth is self-reflection, which involves a deep understanding of curricular expectations, students' needs, and the continuous evaluation of instructional effectiveness, all grounded in ethical and informed decision-making. This process is inherently complex, yet when carried out effectively, it enhances classroom practice and contributes to the learning and development of both students and colleagues. Importantly, self-reflection is most impactful when carried out collaboratively. As Edge (in Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001) emphasized, reflective practice is strengthened through dialogue with others. Collaborative dialogue, constructive feedback, and collegial support enable educators to refine their instruction and better respond to students' evolving needs.

As Danielson (2009) noted, reflective practice empowers teachers to become authoritative professionals who respond effectively to classroom challenges (Akbari, 2007; Dewey, 1938; Schön, 1983, 1987). In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on raising student language proficiency and meeting more rigorous

performance standards. As a result, foreign language programs have increasingly prioritized faculty development as a key factor in student success. Faculty development initiatives have been established to design coherent professional development systems and career pathways, placing the cultivation of reflective teachers at the center of efforts to improve instruction and outcomes (Lee, 2015).

Providing effective PD for foreign language teachers is challenging due to their diverse educational backgrounds and deeply rooted teaching methods. Most foreign language teachers are native speakers who tend to teach as they were taught – through traditional foreign language learning approaches. However, the field has shifted toward preparing learners for real-world challenges by developing professional language proficiency, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Hwang, 2014). Hall and Simeral (2015) emphasized that this shift requires reflective teachers – those who understand their instructional context, accurately assess student needs, and intentionally adapt their instruction to support learning outcomes.

As a senior teacher trainer with over 25 years of experience, I view teacher preparedness as a cornerstone of effective college-level foreign language instruction. Teachers serve as the most influential agents of change in educational settings, and the success of that change is closely tied to their capacity for self-reflection. As a key driver of professional growth, self-reflection can be meaningfully nurtured through in-service professional development (PD). Reflective practice, as Osterman (1990) emphasized, plays a critical role in enhancing teaching effectiveness. However, cultivating a culture of reflective practitioners requires more than individual effort – it depends on structured and systematic PD initiatives (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In light of this, this action research investigates how professional development influences teachers' self-reflection within a formal academic context.

## **PROBLEM OF PRACTICE**

At a foreign language college in central California, many instructors come from diverse international educational backgrounds that often contrast sharply with the college's local academic context. Although they hold varied qualifications, most receive minimal in-service professional development – typically fewer than eight hours – focused on isolated topics and lacking meaningful opportunities for reflection on teaching practices or student learning. The effectiveness of such fragmented, one-time workshops has been widely questioned in the literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Penuel et al., 2011; Yoon et al., 2007). In contrast, sustained professional growth in teaching demands intentional planning, ongoing engagement, and reflective inquiry (Fosnot, 2005).

Hall and Simeral (2015) emphasized that effective professional development (PD) should increase teachers' awareness of their instructional context, promote intentional planning, and support ongoing instructional adjustments based on feedback. However, research indicates that teachers often require structured support to engage in meaningful reflective practice (Bazanov, 2014; Bourne-Hayes, 2010;

Caccavale, 2017; Tomlinson, 2004; Wyman, 2010). A 2017 institutional review of the college's foreign language departments echoed these findings, concluding that short-term PD was inadequate for fostering sustained instructional change or promoting reflective teaching. Traditional PD at the college fell short in cultivating teacher self-reflection.

In response to this need, the present action research study designed and implemented a sustained PD program specifically tailored to the reflection tendencies of foreign language instructors. Drawing on Hall and Simeral's (2015) framework, the program guided teachers through iterative cycles of awareness, intentional action, assessment, and instructional refinement. The PD included resources on effective teaching strategies, formative assessment, lesson planning, and classroom management. As both facilitator and peer mentor, the author supported participants in becoming more reflective practitioners. Understanding how in-service PD fosters self-reflection is essential for developing professional learning experiences that align with teachers' needs and, ultimately, enhance student learning outcomes.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is grounded in social constructivist theory and reflective teaching practices, aiming to develop teachers' reflective skills through a PD program that is tailored to their initial reflective teaching tendencies. It assumes that teachers learn by drawing on prior experiences, engaging with peers and mentors, and participating in context-specific activities. Reflective teaching is seen as inherently tied to cognitive, social, cultural, and linguistic factors, aligning with the principles of social constructivism (Hall & Simeral, 2015). Social constructivist theory, rooted in cognitive constructivism (Piaget, 1932, 1968, 1972) and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), views knowledge as actively constructed by learners through authentic, experience-based tasks in social contexts (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008; Pelech & Pieper, 2010).

### **Teachers Construct Their Knowledge**

Dewey (1916) described education as a constructive process, while Piaget (1932, 1968, 1972) emphasized that learners build mental frameworks based on past experiences and use them in practice. Teachers construct ways to make sense of their learning experience. Reflective teaching is what concerns us. Watkins (cited in Badie, 2016) highlighted that knowledge construction is reflective, linking past experiences to future actions. Additionally, reflective teaching recognizes that knowledge isn't purely subjective but shaped by social contexts, dialogue, and life experiences (Dewey, 1938; Foucault, 1998; Piaget, 1932). Therefore, teachers need time and encouragement to apply and reflect on new knowledge in their practice (Fosnot, 2005).

## **Teachers' Knowledge Is Experience-Based**

Dewey (1938) explained that principles are abstract until applied in real-life contexts like school or home. Similarly, Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasized that adults learn by reinterpreting concepts through their experiences, often developing new understandings. They not only reinterpret existing concepts and principles, but also frequently construct new frameworks of understanding grounded in their lived experiences. Through critical inquiry, they identify key learning moments and make contributions to the development of their knowledge. Thus, teachers likely adapt teaching strategies based on their experiences, reshaping their views on teaching and learning.

## **Teachers' Learning Is a Social Process**

While Piaget (1932) acknowledged the social nature of knowledge construction, Vygotsky (1978) expanded this through his sociocultural theory (SCT), which emphasizes that learning occurs through interactions between more and less knowledgeable individuals (Lantolf, 2008). According to Walqui (2006), key SCT principles include learning precedes development; language is central to thinking; mediation supports learning; social interaction drives development; and the zone of proximal development is where learning happens.

As mentioned, SGT emphasizes that learning and development are shaped by social interaction and the surrounding environment. Vygotsky (1978) underscored the importance of teacher–student interaction, noting that teachers must actively guide learning within each student's zone of proximal development. Through meaningful social interactions, learners can expand their potential and deepen understanding. The same principles apply to teachers' learning. According to social constructivists, knowledge is not acquired in isolation but constructed through negotiation and experience within culturally embedded contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). These contexts operate on three levels: the immediate level, involving direct interactions with others; the structured level, encompassing institutions like family and work; and the cultural level, which includes broader societal influences such as language and symbols (Bodrova & Leong, 2001). In professional development, this framework supports teacher growth by fostering with peers and PD facilitators/trainers. Engaging in dialogue, sharing experiences, and considering diverse perspectives all contribute to the construction and transformation of knowledge (Fosnot, 2005; Lee, 2007; Marchenkova, 2005).

The social constructivist framework emphasizes a transactional-transformational learning process, where interactions among teachers, trainers, and the PD environment are essential for developing teacher knowledge. As Howe and Stubbs (1996) noted, applying this perspective requires awareness of the training context; the mediating role of language; and the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and values of participants. However, teachers' existing beliefs and practices may conflict with new paradigms in language teaching, hindering their learning. To enact

meaningful change, teachers must engage in ongoing, conscious reflection (Mezirow, 2000). Reflective thinking, though, is a complex process that requires evaluating actions through the lens of theory, methodology, and teaching context (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

## **Reflective Teaching**

Reflective practices align with the social constructivist paradigm, as both emphasize that knowledge is actively constructed through experience and interaction (Fosnot, 2005; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Richards, 2010). This study explores how social constructivist and reflective teaching frameworks can be integrated into in-service professional development (PD), using Hall and Simeral's (2015) reflective teaching model as a guiding framework. Their model provides a foundation for interpreting the study's findings and understanding how PD can influence reflective teaching.

According to Hall and Simeral, teachers operate through a "reflective cycle," where they build awareness before acting intentionally, practice with purpose, assess the impact of their actions, and then use this insight to inform future actions and interventions. Reflection, in this model, is seen as a habit that requires consistent practice, focus, and commitment. Reflective teachers are proactive, regularly examining their teaching and student learning without external prompts. They make deliberate instructional decisions to meet students' needs, illustrating how reflective teaching fosters adaptive, student-centered practice. Figure 1 illustrates the four dimensions of reflective teaching according to Hall and Simeral (2015). In this framework,

### **A. Reflective Teachers Have Awareness of Their Instructional Realities**

Hall and Simeral (2015) explained that teacher awareness involves understanding each student's interests, motivation, learning profile, and instructional needs. This awareness helps teachers tailor content delivery to better support learning and retention. At this stage in the reflective cycle, teachers ask, "How aware am I of my students, content, and pedagogy?" (p. 39).

### **B. Reflective Teachers are Intentional in Their Actions**

In this stage of the reflective cycle, teachers intentionally act to support student learning. Guided by awareness, they purposefully choose learning goals, materials, strategies, and groupings to meet specific student needs (Hall & Simeral, 2015). Unlike routine teaching, these actions are deliberate and research-based. Teachers reflect by asking, "How intentionally do I plan and deliver all aspects of my teaching?" (p. 40).

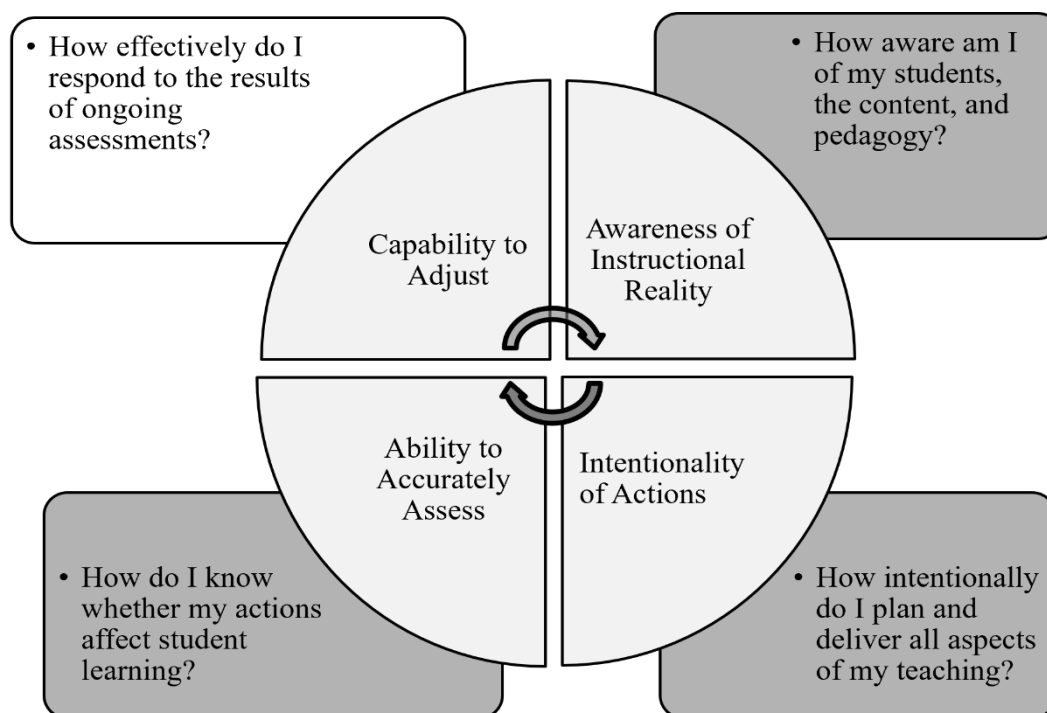
### **C. Reflective Teachers Accurately Assess Their Impact**

At this stage, teachers ask, "How do I know whether my actions affect student learning?" (Hall & Simeral, 2015, p. 40). After delivering instruction intentionally, they assess its impact using tools like observations, quizzes, or surveys. This data helps identify which strategies effectively support student learning.

### D. Reflective Teachers Adjust Their Actions as They Teach

In this stage, teachers ask, “How effectively do I respond to the results of ongoing assessments?” (Hall & Simeral, 2015, p. 41). Based on formative assessment data, they adjust instruction – modifying objectives, activities, or groupings – to better support learning. Skilled reflective teachers know timely interventions can significantly improve outcomes.

**FIGURE 1. The Reflective Teaching Cycle**



Hall and Simeral (2015) conceptualized teachers’ reflective capacities as progressing along a reflection continuum. They proposed that as educators deepen their knowledge and enhance their instructional practices, they advance through this continuum with the aim of reaching the refinement stage – a phase marked by ongoing, habitual reflection. Figure 2 shows the continuum of self-reflection stages. It comprises four distinct stages: (1) the unaware stage, (2) the conscious stage, (3) the action stage, and (4) the refinement stage. Each stage represents a different level of reflective awareness and engagement. Hall and Simeral emphasized that the continuum is intended as a developmental guide, helping teachers better understand their reflective processes in order to improve decision-making and professional practice. Importantly, they clarified that no stage is inherently superior or inferior; rather, the terms simply describe varying ways teachers think about and approach their work.

**FIGURE 2. Continuum of Self-Reflection Stages**

**Unaware Stage:** According to Hall and Simeral (2015), this stage is marked by a limited understanding of teaching practices and minimal reflective thinking. Teachers tend to follow traditional routines, rely heavily on textbooks, and assess effectiveness based on content coverage and student attentiveness. Reflection is typically limited to grading tasks, and student feedback is mainly delivered through scores and grades.

**Conscious Stage:** Hall and Simeral (2015) describe this stage as characterized by increased awareness of students' learning needs and the use of general formative assessments. Teachers begin exploring new strategies and responding to student struggles, but their planning lacks intentionality, and they cannot yet diagnose why a lesson succeeds or fails. Instructional decisions are reactive rather than proactive.

**Action Stage:** Hall and Simeral (2015) describe teachers in this stage as actively responding to student learning needs using a range of strategies. They understand individual progress, connect lessons across time, and reflect before and after instruction. While they attempt to adjust teaching based on assessment, their interventions may not always be effective.

**Refinement Stage:** According to Hall and Simeral (2015), teachers in this stage consistently reflect and tailor instruction to individual student needs, viewing students through a strengths-based lens. They intentionally design lessons, align strategies with learning goals, and make real-time adjustments based on student behavior. Teaching is guided by deep content knowledge and flexible pedagogy to maximize learning.

Unquestionably, reflective teaching is essential for helping teachers interpret, evaluate, and reshape the meaning of their practice. It allows them to move beyond surface-level learning. As Mezirow (2000) explained, reflection reveals inaccurate assumptions, which can then be replaced with more accurate, critically aware perspectives. Without reflection, these assumptions persist, often shaping teaching practices in limiting and ineffective ways. Through this process, teachers are better equipped to respond to diverse student needs, adapt to changing educational demands, and continuously refine their professional standing. In this context, teacher PD plays a vital role in fostering and sustaining reflective practices. Tailored, individualized PD provides structured opportunities for teachers to engage in critical dialogue, receive feedback, and explore evidence-based practices in a collaborative setting (Lee, 2012). Programs, therefore, promote reflective teaching, collaboration, and critical dialogue to help teachers meet evolving demands (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Glisczinski, 2007).

Recent studies on specific PD programs have demonstrated positive impacts on student outcomes (DeMonte, 2013; Heller, et al., 2012; Polly et al., 2015; Yoon, et al., 2007). Moreover, findings from two meta-analyses revealed statistically significant effects of PD on student achievement (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Gersten et al., 2014).

These studies indicate that PD can enhance teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices in ways that are positively linked to student learning. Additional research employing hierarchical linear modeling and pre-/post-test assessments found that teachers who engaged in PD showed notable gains in content knowledge and, in some instances, performed significantly better than comparison groups (Bell, et al., 2010; Garet et al., 2008; Polly et al., 2015).

The field of teacher PD encompasses a wide range of programs aimed at enhancing educators' knowledge and skills. According to Sawchuck (2010), PD activities include formal pre-service programs, coursework or degrees pursued for certification, recertification, or salary advancement, as well as involvement in subject-specific associations or informal professional networks. However, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of some PD models. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Wei et al. (2010) critique the commonly used workshop model, where schools or districts invite consultants to deliver one-time training sessions during teacher development days. Wei et al. (2010) highlight the lack of coherence and ongoing support in such approaches. This criticism aligns with The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Bush, 2001), which explicitly defines effective PD as more than one-day or short-term workshops or conferences. Darling Hammond et al. (2017) concluded that effective professional development (a) "is content focused, (b) incorporates active learning, (c) supports collaboration, (d) uses models of effective practice, (e) provides coaching and expert support, (f) offers feedback and reflection, and (g) is of sustained duration" (pp. v–vi).

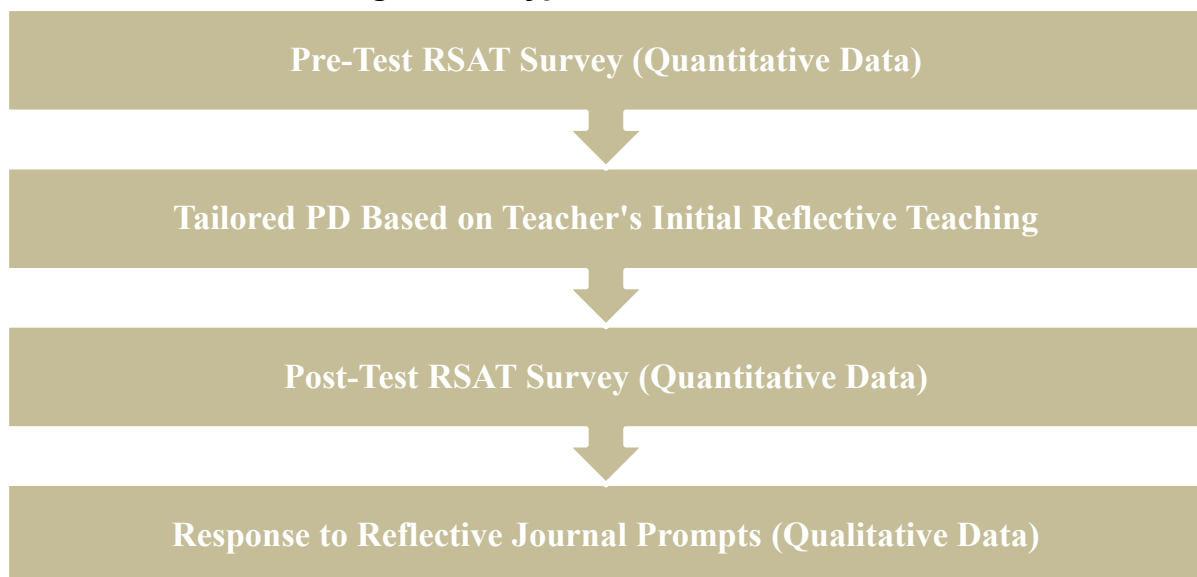
Building on the existing literature, evidently the quality and design of PD can significantly improve teacher self-reflection. To further explore the relationship, the following research questions are answered in the action research:

- RQ1. How does a social constructivist PD program impact DLIFLC foreign language teachers' self-reflection tendencies?
- a. Does the PD program impact DLIFLC teachers' awareness of their instructional reality (student, content, and pedagogy)?
  - b. Does the PD program impact teachers' intentionality in taking steps to facilitate students' learning?
  - c. Does the PD program impact teachers' ability to assess students' learning?
  - d. Does the PD program impact teachers' capability to adjust their actions while teaching?
  - e. Does the PD program impact the frequency of teachers' self-reflection?

## METHOD

Mertler (2017) characterized this design as one in which the practitioner-researcher initially collects quantitative data, followed by qualitative data to support, clarify, or expand upon the quantitative findings (p. 107). Similarly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) advocated for the mixed-methods approach when quantitative results alone are insufficient to explain outcomes; in such cases, qualitative data can offer deeper insight by capturing participants' perspectives (p. 34). Accordingly, this action research adopts an explanatory mixed-method design to explore more thoroughly the impact of the professional development program on foreign language teachers' self-reflection practices. Twelve teachers volunteered to participate in the study; four teachers of Arabic languages, three teachers of Chinese language, four teachers of Korean language, and two teachers of Russian language. Teachers are referred to as "participating teachers" (PT 1, PT 2, PT 3, etc.). PT7 dropped out during the first week of the PD program. Nine teachers had master's degrees, and two teachers had doctorate degrees; their teaching experiences ranged between one year and 14 years.

**FIGURE 3. Research Design, Data Type, and Instruments Used to Collect Data**



The PD program was adapted from Hall and Simeral (2015). It included two learning phases:

**Phase I:** Teachers explored their reflective teaching stages (Hall & Simeral, 2015), engaged in goal-setting, discussed preconditions for reflection, analyzed sample journals, and established criteria for critical friendships. The author clarified her mentoring role.

**Phase II:** Teachers implemented a six-week PD plan tailored to the "action stage" of reflection. Each week focused on tasks such as daily reflection, student case studies, peer and supervisor observations, feedback processing, and end-of-program self-assessment. Reflective prompts guided their practice throughout. Appendix A outlines the syllabus of the PD program.

Teachers' reflective teaching was measured using the pre-/post-test self-administered survey (RSAT) and teachers' responses to their final reflective journal prompts. Figure 3 shows the research design, data type, and instruments used to collect data. The survey was designed to help teachers identify their stage of reflective teaching. The pre-test includes two parts: Part One presents 10 scenarios aligned with five key components of reflection: awareness of instructional reality (scenarios 7, 10), intentionality of actions (1, 3, 6), assessing student needs (4, 9), adjusting actions (5, 8), and frequency of reflection (2; see Appendix B). Each scenario includes four response options corresponding to the four stages of self-reflection (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Each week, participating teachers completed reflective journals with guided prompts, submitted as assignments. The final week's journal, containing 10 open-ended questions, was used to validate post-test RSAT results (see Appendix C). Prompts were adapted from Hall and Simeral (2015) and customized based on each teacher's initial reflection stage. Questions addressed key areas such as instructional awareness, intentional lesson planning, use of formative assessment, instructional adjustments, and frequency of reflection. The questions were open-ended and reviewed by four faculty development trainers for clarity and relevance.

## **FINDINGS**

The study's findings are presented in response to the research questions and highlight the influence of the professional development program on participating teachers' self-reflection practices. Tendencies were (a) awareness of instructional reality (students, content, and pedagogy), (b) intentionality in taking steps to facilitate students' learning, (c) ability to assess students, (d) capability to adjust actions while teaching, and (e) frequency of reflection. The results show a 22.4% overall increase in participating teachers' (PTs') self-reflection tendencies. On the pre-test, all PTs scored between 27 and 34 points, placing them in the action stage of self-reflection (Hall & Simeral, 2015), with an overall average of 76.3%. In the post-test, scores ranged from 27 to 39 points, with six PTs remaining in the action stage and five advancing to the refinement stage, raising the overall average to 84.7%. However, two PTs showed declines in their self-reflection scores but remained within the action stage. Table 1 shows PT's pre-test and post-test scores, and stages and percentages of increase and decrease in self-reflection tendencies.

The most insightful cases were PT 3 and PT 12, who showed the highest increases in self-reflection – 39.3% and 32.3%, respectively. Their journal entries were detailed, included concrete examples of efforts to enhance student learning, and reflected strong intrinsic motivation. They consistently planned their reflections in advance, discussed them with the author, and critically examined their teaching practices. Their approach aligns with Dewey's (1910) view of reflection as a committed process rooted in analyzing one's own experiences to improve teaching.

Additionally, PT 3 and PT 12 effectively combined resources from the reflective teaching program, their prior knowledge, and a variety of instructional strategies to adapt their teaching to student needs. They engaged confidently with the course materials and found the reflective tasks valuable. Both were proactive in leading their professional growth, supported by available resources and peers. They consistently aimed to make a positive impact on their broader teaching context – including students, colleagues, supervisors, and the school – and embraced their role as change agents with responsibility and wholeheartedness (Dewey, 1910).

**TABLE 1. PTs' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores, and Stages and Percentage Increase or Decrease in Self-Reflection Tendencies**

PTs	Pre-Test Score	Pre-Test Stage	Post-Test Score	Post-Test Stage	Percentage Increase or Decrease
PT 3	28	Action	39	Refinement	+39.3%
PT 12	28	Action	37	Refinement	+32.1%
PT 4	32	Action	36	Refinement	+12.5%
PT 2	33	Action	37	Refinement	+12.1%
PT 11	34	Action	38	Refinement	+11.8%
PT 5	30	Action	33	Action	+10.0%
PT 8	30	Action	33	Action	+10.0%
PT 9	29	Action	31	Action	+6.9%
PT 1	27	Action	29	Action	+7.4%
PT 10	33	Action	31	Action	-6.0%
PT 6	32	Action	27	Action	-15.6%

Besides, PT 3 and PT 12 recognized the importance of a supportive community for meaningful change. They consistently collaborated with peers, supervisors, and the author throughout the reflective teaching program and viewed the experience as a pivotal moment in their professional growth. PT 12 even expressed interest in encouraging others to join, acknowledging some colleagues' hesitation toward unfamiliar methods. Both participants were eager to share their learning through professional platforms, such as publishing or presenting. This proactive mindset reflects the refinement stage of self-reflection, where teachers extend their growth by supporting and leading others (Hall & Simeral, 2015).

Unlike PT 3 and PT 12, PT 10, and PT 6 showed decreases in self-reflection tendencies (-6% and -15.5%, respectively). Their journal entries lacked specific actions or clear evidence of growth, often reflecting their initial action stage. Both faced significant challenges completing the reflective tasks due to demanding schedules. It is worth mentioning that PT 10 taught across three departments and programs, yet remained engaged with the journal prompts, noting their value in focusing her attention. PT 6 faced scheduling conflicts and overlapping responsibilities, which limited her ability to complete tasks on time. Although she experimented with new strategies, she was unsure of their impact due to fragmented teaching assignments.

Findings of research sub-question a, "Does the PD program impact teachers' awareness of their instructional reality (student, content, and pedagogy)?: Pre- and

post-test RSAT survey results showed that 8 out of 11 PTs improved their awareness of instructional reality. The average score rose from 5.8 to 7.9, marking a 22.4% increase – the highest gain among all self-reflection tendencies measured.

Findings of research sub-question b, “Does the PD program impact teachers’ intentionality in taking steps to facilitate students’ learning?”: Intentionality to facilitate student learning showed the lowest growth among all tendencies. The average increased slightly from 8.7 to 8.9, a 2.1% gain. While 7 out of 11 PTs improved, PT 9’s score remained unchanged at 7, and PTs 1, 10, and 8 scored lower on the post-test – falling 5, 4, and 1 point(s), respectively.

Findings of research sub-question c, “Does the PD program impact teachers’ ability to assess students’ learning?”: RSAT survey results showed that 7 of 11 PTs improved their ability to assess student learning. The average score rose from 6.4 to 7.2, reflecting a 12.9% increase. PT 2 and PT 4 maintained their scores of 8 and 7, respectively. PT 6 dropped by 2 points to 4, and PT 11 lost 1 point, scoring 7 on the post-test.

Findings of research sub-question d, “Does the PD program impact teachers’ capability to adjust their actions while teaching?”: RSAT survey results showed a modest increase in the PTs’ ability to adjust their actions while teaching, with the average rising from 6.7 to 7.2 – a 6.8% gain. Six of the 11 PTs improved, while PTs 3, 6, and 9 maintained scores of 8, 6, and 7, respectively. PT 10’s score dropped from 7 to 5 on the post-test.

Findings of research sub-question e, “Does the PD program impact the frequency of teachers’ self-reflection?”: RSAT results showed a 13.2% increase in the frequency of self-reflection, with average scores rising from 3.4 to 3.9. All PTs, except PT 1, reached the refinement stage. PTs 3, 4, and 8 showed slight gains, while others maintained the highest score of 4. PT 1 had the most significant improvement, moving from a score of 1 (unaware stage) to 3 (action stage).

## **DISCUSSION**

The six-week reflective teaching program used a social constructivist approach to support foreign language teachers in developing knowledge and self-reflection through a collaborative learning environment. Teachers actively shaped their own learning while receiving structured guidance. The program built on their prior experiences, peer interaction, and engagement with activities rooted in their teaching contexts. The findings showed that most PTs improved their self-reflection tendencies after completing the six-week reflective teaching program. The greatest gains were in their awareness of instructional realities, followed by increased frequency of reflection, improved ability to assess student needs, and then better adaptability in instruction. The smallest gain was in intentionality of actions. While two PTs showed declines but remained in the action stage, the rest improved – five advancing to the refinement stage and four progressing within the action stage.

Teachers' reflective journal entries helped explain the quantitative trends. Three PTs stood out, showing the highest increases across all areas. Their journals provided clear evidence of refined reflective practices, including strong awareness, intentional action, adaptability, and frequent self-reflection. They were deeply invested in both their growth and their students' learning. Their approach aligns with Dewey's (1910) view of reflective teaching as a deliberate, inquiry-driven process aimed at meaningful change – beyond routine action to intentional, informed improvement.

Hall and Simeral (2015) stated that reflective teaching begins with awareness of instructional reality. This action research found that PTs showed the greatest growth in this area, becoming more attentive to students' linguistic and non-linguistic needs, critically evaluating materials, and using their knowledge and resources to address classroom challenges. The next step – intentionality of actions – showed the smallest gain. Still, most PTs improved, planning their lessons deliberately and questioning the effectiveness of their teaching in specific contexts.

PTs also showed growth in assessing their teaching. Their journals reflected the use of formative assessment strategies to evaluate student learning, motivation, and preferences, leading them to identify challenges and apply interventions. Their ability to adjust instruction also improved, with examples of real-time responses to students' needs using targeted strategies.

As reflection deepened, PTs reported increased frequency of reflection – not only after lessons but also before and during. All noted this growth, though one less-experienced PT found it challenging during busy workdays.

The PTs who showed a decrease in self-reflection tendencies faced significant external challenges that were reflected in their journal entries. They were overwhelmed by demanding schedules, such as teaching multiple student groups across teams for long hours or attending intensive training, which made it difficult to maintain awareness of their shifting instructional realities or assess diverse student needs. These conditions limited their ability to anticipate student responses or adjust instruction in real time, leading them to rely heavily on textbook activities. This supports Korthagen's (2017) view that reflective practice requires supportive conditions. Similarly, Zeichner and Liston (2013) emphasized that teachers' practices are shaped not only by beliefs but also by their work environments, where strict schedules and policies can restrict their pedagogical choices. Farrell (2007) also stressed the importance of giving teachers time and space to reflect effectively. Finally, PTs recognized the value of collaboration. They actively engaged with peers, supervisors, and the author, aligning with Farrell's (2007) view that collaboration reduces isolation and strengthens reflective practice. Many PTs expressed a strong desire to share their learning through professional channels to inspire other teachers to reflect.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the face of diverse learners' needs, technological demands, and high standards, reflective teaching equips educators to meet today's classroom challenges more effectively. The findings suggest that the social constructivist PD program in this study effectively enhanced foreign language teachers' self-reflection tendencies and frequency of reflection. This aligns with Beck and Kosnik's (2006) view that such programs help teachers re-examine prior knowledge, understand their learning, evaluate their actions, and consider better approaches. Teachers became more self-aware, linking content, teaching, and student learning. They saw reflection as a responsibility, requiring intentional planning and regular use of assessment to inform instruction. Many reflected consistently before, during, and after lessons – two even described it as a new way of life. The program also fostered collaboration with peers, supervisors, and the author, reinforcing the idea that meaningful change is collective. Teachers benefited from peer observations, feedback, and guided reflection discussions. However, supportive conditions, such as manageable schedules and stable student groups, were essential for reflection to flourish. These findings support integrating the six-week reflective teaching program into faculty development plans.

## **Recommendations**

For future implementation of the social constructivist reflective teaching program, teacher trainers and supervisors should have a deep understanding of what constitutes reflective teaching – its principles, benefits, and challenges – and consistently embed reflective dialogue into teachers' daily practices (Simeral & Hall, 2017). They must actively support self-reflection, self-assessment, and collaboration by identifying teachers' individual needs and guiding them toward meaningful instructional change. Effective leadership in this context means creating conditions that foster effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006). A servant leadership model best fits this role of supervisors and faculty trainers. Servant leaders prioritize the growth and well-being of others, empowering and nurturing them (Northouse, 2015). For teacher trainers and supervisors, this means serving first, leading second, and deeply valuing teachers' voices and potential (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). This leadership approach must function within the school educational context, shaped by teachers' experiences – what Brubaker (2004) called the "inner curriculum." When teachers, peers, and leaders collaborate around a shared goal, they co-create meaningful learning environments. In this setting, teachers plan, reflect, and problem-solve together, building confidence and autonomy.

This reflective teaching program offers such a space. Grounded in social constructivism, it encourages teachers to take charge of their learning by interacting, sharing, and reflecting with peers and mentors (Fosnot, 1996; Hall & Simeral, 2017). A key success factor is teacher receptivity. Trainers and supervisors should clarify their supportive roles at the start, and participation should be voluntary to ensure teacher's engagement and buy-in (Meuser et al., 2011).

## Limitations

Herr and Anderson (2015) described action research as a human, knowledge-generating process shaped by subjective decisions about what to include or omit in reporting findings. Recognizing this, the author acknowledges that interpretations are time-bound, and future reviews of the data may reveal new insights. The 11 participating teachers in the pre-test survey demonstrated self-reflection tendencies at the action stage, a level higher than the unaware and conscious stages. As a result, their reflective tasks aligned with action stage practices. Future research should include teachers identified by supervisors as being in the unaware or conscious stages. Inviting these teachers to participate would help assess the PD program's impact across varying levels of self-reflection. Furthermore, to ensure clarity of the interpretation of the findings in teachers' reflective journals, the author conducted multiple member checks with participants during qualitative analysis. Future studies should include follow-up interviews to gain deeper insight into teachers' self-reflection tendencies.

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX A

### Syllabus of Reflective Teaching Course Six-Week Professional Development Program

#### I. Descriptive Information

- A. **Course Title:** Reflective Teaching for Foreign Language Teachers
- B. **Catalog Description:** This is a two-phase professional development program for foreign language teachers to critically evaluate their belief systems and engage in strategies designed to increase their self-reflection tendencies. Teachers take action, try new instructional strategies, or step out of their comfort zone. They work collaboratively with colleagues in their schools, faculty development specialists, and their supervisors.
- C. **Course Length:** Six weeks
- D. **Prerequisites:** None
- E. **Intended Audience:** Foreign language teachers
- F. **Facilitator:** Hanan Khaled
- G. **Others Involved:** Peers, faculty development specialists, and supervisors

#### II. Required Text

Hall, P., & Simeral, A. (2015). *Teach, reflect, learn: Building your capacity for success in the classroom*. ASCD.  
Online readings, media, and articles will be used throughout this course.

#### III. Required Software

This is a hybrid course, face-to-face and online. You will need the following software:

- DLIFLC-Sakai
- Microsoft Word

#### IV. Course Goals & Objectives

##### A. Goals

All teachers will demonstrate, to varying degrees, skills and tendencies related to awareness of instructional reality, intentionality of actions, ability to accurately assess students' needs, capability to adjust actions, and frequency of reflection. They will be in charge of their professional development. They will build experience and strengthen expertise through development of deeper reflective habits. They will practice detail-oriented observation and analysis of what they observe. They will build new confidence around new strategies and insights into their students in order to maximize results in their classroom. They will build awareness of the strong cause-and-effect relationship between teacher actions and student results. They will build capacity for greater self-reflection.

## B. Objectives

Teachers will do the following:

- differentiate between routine and reflective action
- describe preconditions for self-reflection
- set communication norms with peers
- assess self-reflection tendencies
- respond to reflective journal prompts indicating their first week's successes and challenges and lessons learned
- analyze and design lesson plans for specific objectives
- use formative assessment techniques to identify students' specific needs.
- explain students' needs
- reflect on how the student succeeds and struggles for a week
- observe a colleague's classroom to learn about a particular instructional strategy
- use the observation to respond to reflective journal prompts
- be observed by a supervisor and take notes of feedback
- use feedback to respond to reflective journal prompts
- discuss supervisor's feedback with the school's faculty development specialist
- compare their initial notes in the first reflective journal with their final reflective journal

## V. Academic Course Requirements

### Professional Participation

Your active participation in this program is essential for building reflective teaching tendencies. Responsibility for participation includes collaborating with peers, faculty development specialists in your school, the course facilitator, and your supervisor. You are also responsible of navigating through the course Sakai site to identify supporting resources for teaching, assessment, lesson planning, etc. You are expected to fully participate in all scheduled discussions and reflective tasks.

### Writing Standards

The reflective teaching program recognizes and expects exemplary writing to be the norm for course work. Careful attention should be given to spelling and punctuation.

## VI. Administrative Course Requirements

Course materials will be available on our course website within Sakai. Teachers will undertake all work **independently**. Teachers enrolled in this course must have access to a computer with internet connectivity and an email account for regular communication with the instructor. All reflective journals will be submitted electronically to the Sakai site.

## **VII. Major Topics**

- Self-reflection tendencies
- Stances of reflective teachers
- Setting goals
- Reflective teaching tasks
- Strategies to raise awareness of instruction and student learning
- Strategies to plan instruction intentionally
- Strategies to assess students while teaching
- Strategies to adjust instruction based on results of assessment
- Strategies to increase frequency of reflection

## **VIII. Schedule**

Adapted from Hall and Simeral (2015).

## APPENDIX B

### Reflective Self-Assessment Tool

Reprint from Hall and Simeral (2015, pp. 26–31)

Before you get started, it's important to emphasize this advice: Be honest. Choose the statement that resonates with you first. There are no right or wrong answers, nor good or bad scores, only choices that match your patterns of thinking and information that informs your next-steps. You could probably read the scenarios and pretty easily choose the option that indicates stronger reflective tendencies, but if that's not an honest appraisal of your thinking, you'll get erroneous feedback that will send you down the wrong path. This tool is for your use, so again: Be honest.

Read each of the following 10 scenarios and circle the letter next to the response that is MOST ACCURATE, MOST LIKELY, or MOST OFTEN the approach you would take in that situation. You will likely find that some of the scenarios have more than one option that matches how you operate. In that case, go with your gut – what would you typically do? After the final scenario, you'll record your responses on a scoring chart and follow the next set of directions to analyze the results.

**1. When planning for today's (or tomorrow's) lesson, MOST OFTEN I...**

- a. Begin with the content and activities that we will be covering, and occasionally prepare specific teaching strategies.
- b. Utilize recent student assessment data to determine what I'm going to teach and how I'm going to teach it.
- c. Spend most of my time deciding which instructional methods I'll use to meet specific needs of my students, relying on unit plans to determine the content.
- d. Consult the teacher's edition and follow the lessons as provided

**2. When considering the frequency that I reflect on my teaching, MOST OFTEN I...**

- a. Reflect usually after teaching a particular lesson and/or analyzing an assessment.
- b. Reflect after grading student work or when prompted by an administrator, coach, or colleague.
- c. Occasionally reflect on my own, usually after grading assignments or quizzes.
- d. Continuously reflect, including during the lesson itself.

**3. When planning to address student misconceptions, MOST OFTEN I...**

- a. Address them when they occur, because it is difficult to tell where students will struggle.
- b. Follow the plan for the lesson from beginning to end.
- c. Analyze student work to determine what struggles they're having, then plan to address them.
- d. Plan for check-ins through the lesson, so I can provide support as necessary.

- 4. When I encounter students that struggle in a lesson, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Analyze each student's specific struggles to determine a course of action to address them.
  - b. Can't always tell why they struggle because there are so many variables.
  - c. Realize I have little control over how some students perform, so I continue to encourage them.
  - d. Look at my teaching strategies to see if changing strategies might have a better effect.
  
- 5. When attempting to re-engage students who are off-task, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Stop the lesson, regroup the students, and resume the lesson when I'm ready.
  - b. Address the situation with a variety of pre-planned engagement strategies.
  - c. Employ a strategy that I am most comfortable with and have used before with success.
  - d. Use ideas from the lesson plan I'm following and/or power through in hopes that the students will reengage.
  
- 6. When I ask questions in class, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Ask questions that I have prepared in advance.
  - b. Ask questions from a collection I have prepared, varying my asking/answering strategies.
  - c. Ask questions that come to me while I'm teaching that will continue to move the lesson forward.
  - d. Ask the questions as written in the lesson plan.
  
- 7. When describing the students whom I teach each day, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Can identify those who are most/least successful, who struggle with assignments, and who are the first to finish.
  - b. Share the students' academic profiles and can cite the latest assessment data.
  - c. Focus on personality, behavioral, and overarching descriptive traits.
  - d. Can explain the latest assessment data, including anecdotal information, and describe how students are grouped for instruction.
  
- 8. When students are struggling in a lesson, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Stick with the lesson plans to make sure we cover the required material.
  - b. Attempt to address the learning gaps by modifying the following day's lesson.
  - c. Adjust my instructional approaches immediately.
  - d. Will go back and re-teach the problems they got wrong.
  
- 9. When determining the level of success of a particular unit, MOST OFTEN I...**
  - a. Monitor the progress of individual students through continuous formative and summative assessment strategies.
  - b. Monitor class performance on lesson assignments and/or quizzes to see if they are "getting it."

- c. Monitor performance by administering an end-of-unit test and noting student scores.
- d. Monitor class progress through formative and summative assessment strategies.

**10. When reflecting on the levels of performance my students demonstrated on a recent assessment, MOST OFTEN I...**

- a. Check the grade book to see how the students fared.
- b. Can describe individual students and the specific concepts they have mastered.
- c. Explain with solid details about how groups of students performed.
- d. Provide information about how the class did as a whole.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Reflective Journal Prompts**

1. How has your awareness of your students grown? Provide details.
2. How has your awareness of the teaching content grown? Provide details.
3. How has your awareness of pedagogy grown? Provide details.
4. To what degree were your lesson plans more intentional? Provide details.
5. Did you add/adjust any strategies you used before to determine whether students learned the intended objectives? Provide details.
6. How often did you assess student learning compared to the period before participating in this program?
7. What actions did you take when you first noticed students struggling?
8. How did you plan for these on-the-spot interventions?
9. Now that you have participated in six weeks of professional development, how do you see the impact of your instruction on student learning?
10. How frequently were you engaged in self-reflective actions during the past six weeks? Explain.

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# Exploring AI-Centered English Language Instruction Among Japanese University EFL Students

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This study examined the effectiveness of a tailored, AI-centered project designed for first-year Japanese university students prior to a four-month study abroad program. The instruction aimed to enhance their English communication skills by targeting specific weaknesses identified in an initial survey (Phase I), which also assessed their attitudes toward English learning and AI. Preliminary findings revealed that while students had markedly limited prior experience with AI in English language learning, they demonstrated receptivity toward Character.AI. Phase II introduced AI-centered instruction to develop communication proficiency. The project positively influenced students' language learning experiences, as shown in their individual questionnaires. Pedagogically, the results indicate that AI-centered instruction should offer mode-specific support: phonetic training for oral errors and lexical reinforcement for typing errors. Ultimately, this study concludes that this AI project offers one pedagogical model for AI integration into EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** AI-centered instruction, affective variables, personalized classroom-based learning

## INTRODUCTION

A key responsibility of educators is to integrate continually advancing technological skills and knowledge into their teaching. Educators must also identify and implement contemporary educational strategies to maintain students' engagement. Included in advancing technology is the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI, hereafter AI) in language education. Hwang and Tu (2021) emphasized AI's expanding applications in language learning: "AI technologies have been increasingly applied to various stages of language learning, including vocabulary learning, grammar instruction, speaking practice, writing assistance, and translation." Zhang et al. (2023) found that artificial intelligence-mediated language instruction significantly enhanced English learning achievement, motivation, and self-regulated learning among EFL learners. Koehler and Mishra (2009) emphasized the interconnectedness of technology, pedagogy, and content (TPACK: technological pedagogical content knowledge), highlighting the complex knowledge teachers need to integrate technology effectively into their instruction.

Careful consideration of both AI's advantages and its potential drawbacks is needed to ensure optimal student development and to uphold the humanistic principles central to effective pedagogical practices. Clugston (2024) explored the multifaceted impact of AI in education, highlighting both its significant advantages and notable disadvantages. One advantage that AI can provide is personalized learning, adapting content and pace to individual student needs. AI learning also enhances engagement and efficiency, offering tailored support and boosting overall educational quality. On the other hand, Clugston noted that AI raises significant data privacy concerns and risks over-reliance, potentially diminishing critical thinking. It also presents ethical challenges like increased cheating, job displacement, and the reinforcement of existing biases. Alghamdy (2023) explored AI's dual impact on English as a foreign language education. While it emphasizes pedagogical benefits like personalized feedback and improved language skills through AI tools, the study also highlighted significant ethical concerns. These include issues such as personal data privacy, the potential for academic dishonesty, and the dehumanizing effect of reduced human interaction in learning. The study ultimately calls for a balanced and ethical integration of AI in EFL, urging careful consideration of both its advantages and its potential drawbacks for student development.

This study examines the effectiveness of AI-centered, classroom-based instruction for Japanese university first-year students who self-evaluated their weakness in English communication skills. The target students took part in a required four-month study abroad program. This project development and design served as their English instruction for their last month of classes prior to their study abroad experience. Before the design and development of the project, the students had taken the required English courses and had finished 46 out of 56 of the required 100-minute classes over the course of an academic year. They had taken fourteen classes per semester using e-learning-based instruction with a single instructor and the same classmates. The instructor's classroom observations prior to launching this project revealed that the students' involvement in the class was passive and that their motivation and interest in learning English was significantly decreasing. They had taken numerous English classes, and they appeared to be fatigued by the repetitive nature of their English studies.

Theoretically, toward the end of one year of instruction, students' skills and affective interest (affective domain) should increase. The affective domain plays a crucial role in education and training, as emphasized by Heinich et al. (1993), who stated that it encompasses "attitudes, appreciations, values and emotions such as enjoying, conserving and respecting." The affective domain highlights the importance not only of cognitive development but also of the emotional and attitudinal aspects of learning. Yashima (2003) further elaborated on this by emphasizing the need for language learning environments that foster autonomy and personal meaning, enabling students to connect with others from different backgrounds. Essentially, the affective domain underscores the significance of creating learning experiences that are both intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging.

Based on this, one would expect that the student participants would be excited and would be looking forward to experiencing life in a foreign country. This experience was about to offer them the chance to gain “personal meaning” by connecting with “others from different backgrounds.” The actual outcomes resulted, however, in somewhat different levels of motivation, interest in English, and English language skills. Their English levels as well as their attitude, interests, and motivation toward studying English and taking part in a required study abroad program varied widely even though they were placed according to their English level at the beginning of their entrance to the university. Over the course of the year, this gap increased despite studying the same required online courses. The motivation behind the design and development of this project was to make the learners’ last stage of preparation to study abroad more meaningful in spite of these differences.

To tackle the learners’ individual English-level and motivational differences, the development and design of the project-based instruction aimed to be variable and help them successfully prepare for the different cultures and languages they were about to experience. To create an educational system to fit the target learners, these differences needed to be considered in the design and development of an effective project. Positive affective shift was the target of this project-based research.

As the core project design and development, Character.AI, a generative AI platform, was selected. Character.AI is a popular AI chatbot platform with which users can chat with AI characters that mimic personalities of celebrities or fictional characters, or chat with custom creations. The project took place during the time when AI was still emerging, and one could hear these key terms in academia and in the media daily. AI was just beginning to play a role in language acquisition, making language learning more accessible and effective for learners. It was determined that embracing AI in language learning could provide one method of learning English or one type of experiential learning in classroom instruction for the target students’ age group.

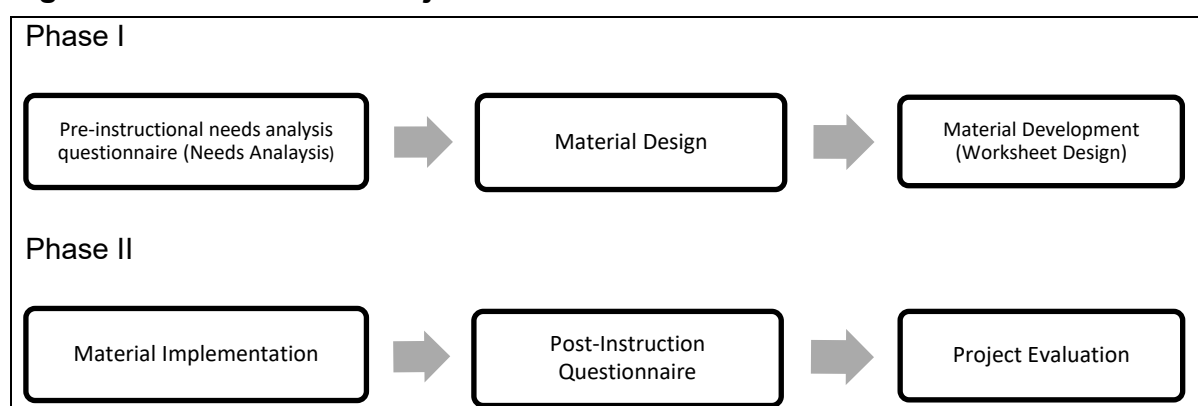
Language learning with AI tends to be based on individual learning styles, as each individual student interacts with AI individually. However, this project’s pedagogical purpose was not only to foster communication between AI and each student, but to also use it to improve classroom dynamics and promote student-to-student communication engagement by using students’ individual AI communication experiences for linguistic skill-building and communication practice. The project design started with determining how to create a project that would take full advantage of classroom dynamics (students’ communication with other people) while using individual student–AI communication.

In this study, to examine the stability of AI-based classroom instruction, data on students’ affective states were collected on numerous occasions. Frequent data collection enabled the instructor to guide the learners to an optimal educational outcome.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Figure 1 describes the procedure of this research design beginning with a project needs analysis, development, and design phase (Phase I), followed by the implementation of the project in the classroom and an examination of the effectiveness of the project (Phase II). Phase I focused on a needs analysis, utilizing a pre-instruction questionnaire to examine target students' affective variables toward English learning and AI use. Building on these findings, Phase II involved the design, development, and classroom implementation of an AI-centered English communication project, with its effectiveness subsequently assessed through post-project questionnaires and student logs. This paper discusses each phase separately.

**Figure 1. Research and Project Procedure**



### Phase I: Introduction

Phase I began with a needs analysis in the form of a pre-instruction questionnaire. This questionnaire examined target students' affective variables toward English learning and AI use. The data from this questionnaire confirmed the need for materials to facilitate English communication practice for this group of students. Materials were developed utilizing Character.AI as a virtual interlocutor. This format enabled students to have individual, personalized communication experience from the EFL classroom.

### Phase I: Method

To examine and identify the target students' affective variables toward English learning and AI use and to introduce and examine AI-centered instruction for English communication skills development with the goal of improving any weak points among their English skills, a written questionnaire in Japanese was administered. The goal was to identify students' current use of AI, their sentiments toward AI, their willingness to try using AI in the English classroom, their self-evaluated English skill proficiency, and their sentiments toward English and learning English. This questionnaire was administered as a needs analysis, the results of which guided the development of the project plan and instructional materials subsequently implemented in the classroom.

## Phase I: Results

The initial section details the pre-instruction questionnaire, utilized as a needs analysis for the project's design and development, which examined participants' backgrounds and motivations concerning English language learning. Table 1 presents a summary of 10 questionnaire items constructed to assess participants' perspectives on English learning. Participants evaluated their responses using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, with an option for *not applicable* (N/A). Results are presented as percentages.

The results revealed that students were divided on whether or not they liked English, with a slight majority stating that they liked English. In answer to the statement "I like English" in Statement 1, 27.2% responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed, 36.4% felt neutral, and 36.0% agreed or strongly agreed. Regarding whether they thought they were good at English, there was a clear majority that felt they were *not* good at English. In response to "I am good at English," 77.3% responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. In spite of the majority feeling that they were not good at English, the vast majority of students wanted to improve their English, with 90.9% stating that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I want to improve my English skills."

**TABLE 1. Participants' Views Toward English Learning**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	N/A (%)
I like English.	4.5 (1)	22.7 (5)	36.4 (8)	31.8 (7)	4.5 (1)	0 (0)
I am good at English.	40.9 (9)	36.4 (8)	22.7 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
I like speaking in English.	9.1 (2)	27.3 (6)	50.0 (11)	9.1 (2)	4.5 (1)	0 (0)
I like writing in English.	9.1 (2)	59.1 (13)	22.7 (5)	9.1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
I like listening in English.	0 (0)	45.5 (10)	27.3 (6)	27.3 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)
I like reading in English.	13.6 (3)	40.9 (9)	31.8 (7)	13.6 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
I want to improve my English skills.	0 (0)	4.5 (1)	4.5 (1)	13.6 (3)	77.3 (17)	0 (0)
I spend more hours studying English now than I did in high school.	27.3 (6)	22.7 (5)	27.3 (6)	18.2 (4)	4.5 (1)	0 (0)
I am more interested in learning English now than when I was in high school.	13.6 (3)	13.6 (3)	31.8 (7)	13.6 (3)	27.3 (6)	0 (0)
I study English outside of my university English classes to prepare to study abroad in Australia.	27.3 (6)	22.7 (5)	45.5 (10)	4.5 (1)	9.1 (2)	0 (0)

Note. N = 22. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

These answers suggest that students recognize the need to improve their skills and that they are very eager to improve their English. Students' eagerness to learn suggests that they would welcome the opportunity to practice their English, clearly demonstrating the need for communication practice material design and implementation. This AI practice program was designed to help in meeting their need and desire to practice their English skills.

Table 2 presents the results of a self-evaluation conducted among 22 English language learners, assessing their perceived proficiency across four key language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The data reflects the percentage of students who identified each skill as their highest, lowest, and the area they most desired to improve.

**TABLE 2. Self-Evaluated English Skill Proficiency**

Language Skill	Highest Skill	Lowest Skill	Improve the Most
Listening (%)	45.5	13.6	9.5
Reading (%)	40.9	18.2	9.5
Writing (%)	13.6	22.7	0
Speaking (%)	0	45.5	81.0

Note. N = 22. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The self-evaluation results indicated that the learners perceived listening (45.5%) and reading (40.9%) as their strongest skills. Notably, none of the students identified speaking as their strongest skill. Conversely, a significant number (45.5%) perceived speaking as their weakest skill. Furthermore, a strong majority (81.0%) of the learners expressed a desire to improve their speaking abilities.

The next two statements examined the participants' experience with daily use of generative AI (ChatGPT) and its use for English language learning use.

**TABLE 3. ChatGPT Use Experience**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I use ChatGPT daily.	50	27.3	13.6	4.5	4.5
I have used ChatGPT for English learning.	81.6	9.1	4.5	0	4.5

Note. N = 22. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Students' responses to the statements about ChatGPT reveal that only 9% of the students used ChatGPT on a daily basis and that 90.7% had not used ChatGPT for English learning (see Table 3).

Figure 2 displays the results of a survey asking 22 students their opinions on using ChatGPT for English learning. The results present a variety of responses, ranging from positive views about its convenience for translation and word checking to concerns about its potential to hinder critical thinking and academic integrity.

**FIGURE 2. Results for “What Do You Think of Using ChatGPT for English Learning?”**

Student Responses
It looks fun.
It is good for checking word meanings, but some people use AI to do assignments, and they learn nothing.
Translation.
No meaning of having in AI to do English Japanese and Japanese-English translation assignment. I think it is not a good thing to use AI for learning English.
Making questions is difficult.
Speaking application which instantly evaluates and gives comments.
Except for the risks of losing the ability to think for ourselves, it is convenient. If you don't misinterpret the way of using it, it is good.
Translation and English quality check.
I think it will lead to lowering humans' ability.

Note. *N* = 22.

The next three items, presented in Table 4, examined the learners' interests and motivation toward learning English by using AI. A significant portion of students expressed neutrality or agreement concerning their interest in AI-centered English learning activities. While a majority were neutral about AI's potential to increase their English ability, a notable percentage (31.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that it would help them improve their English skills. Similarly, a substantial number of students were neutral about trying AI-driven English learning, with a considerable portion (36.4%) expressing interest in trying it. Overall, the data suggests a mixed reception, with neutrality being a prominent response, alongside a substantial interest in exploring AI for English learning.

**TABLE 4. Student Response to Learning with AI**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I am interested in English learning activities using AI.	13.6	22.7	36.4	13.6	13.6
I think English learning activities using AI will increase my English ability.	13.6	4.5	54.5	9.1	22.7
I want to try English learning activities using AI.	4.5	9.1	50	18.2	18.2

Note. *N* = 22. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 5 presents which of the four English skills that students expected to improve through AI-centered English learning. The data revealed varying levels of assumed improvement across listening, reading, writing, and speaking abilities. Notably, reading skills showed the highest percentage of anticipated increase, while speaking ranked as the skill with the lowest anticipated increase.

**TABLE 5. Assumption of Increasing English Skill**

English Skill	Assumption on Increasing English Skill
Listening (%)	27.3
Reading (%)	40.9
Writing (%)	31.8
Speaking (%)	9.1

Note.  $N = 22$ . Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Reading was anticipated to improve the most, with 40.9% of participants selecting this as the skill they assumed would most improve. Writing and listening skills showed moderate anticipated improvement at 31.8% and 27.3%, respectively. Speaking skill was anticipated to improve the least, with only 9.1% of participants selecting this option.

Table 6 summarizes the participants' self-reported knowledge and experience with Character.AI.

**TABLE 6. Knowledge and Experience with Character.AI**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I know Character.AI	81.8	4.5	13.6	0	0
I have used Character.AI	100	0	0	0	0

Note.  $N = 22$ . Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The data revealed that none of the students had ever used Character.AI. It also showed that the majority of students were not even familiar with it, since none of them chose *agree* or *strongly agree* in response to the statement "I know Character.AI." This reveals a complete absence of practical experience with the platform among the group surveyed.

The next questionnaire item examined the participants' assumption of the length of duration they will be able to carry on an English conversation with AI compared to that with a native English speaker and that with non-native English speakers.

**TABLE 7. Assumption of Duration of English Conversation**

Minutes	AI	Native English Speaker	Non-Native English Speaker
1	27.3	13.6	22.7
2	31.8	27.3	36.4
5	18.2	22.7	18.2
8	4.5	4.5	0
10	13.6	13.6	0
15	4.5	4.5	9.1
20	0	4.5	0
30	0	4.5	9.1
More than 30	0	4.5	4.5

Note.  $N = 22$ . Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The highest percentage of students expected their conversation to last between one and five minutes, regardless of whether the interlocutor was AI, a native speaker, or a non-native speaker. Just over 77% of the students expected their conversation with AI or a non-native speaker to last five minutes or less whereas only 63.6% of students expected their conversation with a native speaker to last five minutes or less. Conversely, 36.1% of students felt that their conversation with a native speaker would last 8 minutes or more while only 22.6% expected a conversation with AI or a non-native speaker to last 8 minutes or more. Although the overall percentage was the same, for those who expected the conversation with AI and non-native speakers to last 8 minutes or more, the distribution was different between AI versus non-native speakers. None of the students expected that a conversation with AI would exceed 15 minutes. Of the students, 13.6% expected a conversation with a non-native speaker to last longer than 15 minutes.

Table 8 presents the distribution of responses from 20 participants regarding their motivation to engage in an English language project using Character.AI. It quantifies the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement “Do you want to try the Character.AI English project?” across five categories: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*, expressed both in percentages and raw numbers.

**TABLE 8. Motivation Toward Using Character.AI for English Language Learning**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Do you want to try using Character.AI for an English project?	5 (1)	10 (2)	50 (10)	20 (4)	15 (3)

Note. N = 20.

The data revealed a slightly positive inclination toward using Character.AI for an English language project, with the largest group (50%) expressing a neutral stance. However, when considering the combined *agree* and *strongly agree* responses, which represent 35% of the participants, there is a substantial portion showing active interest. Conversely, a total of 15% chose *disagree* or *strongly disagree*, indicating a notable minority expressing reluctance. This suggests a mixed reception, with a considerable portion open to the idea, despite a prevailing neutral outlook.

Based on the pre-instructional questionnaire results (needs analysis), a majority of students wanted to improve their English-speaking skills. With appropriate development and design of the project, this AI-centered learning supplementation can provide a valuable tool for practicing communication in English. Most of the pedagogical incorporation of AI used in education has centered around ChatGPT. However, in this project, Character.AI was selected. This neural language model chatbot service can generate human-like text responses and participate in contextual conversation. It allows the user to chat with millions of AI characters. With an account and a Wi-Fi connection, anyone can use it anytime, from anywhere. The pedagogical

decision was made because Character.AI provides students with an image of an interlocutor when they communicate, even though they are communicating via a digital interface.

### Phase I: Material Design, Development, and Implementation

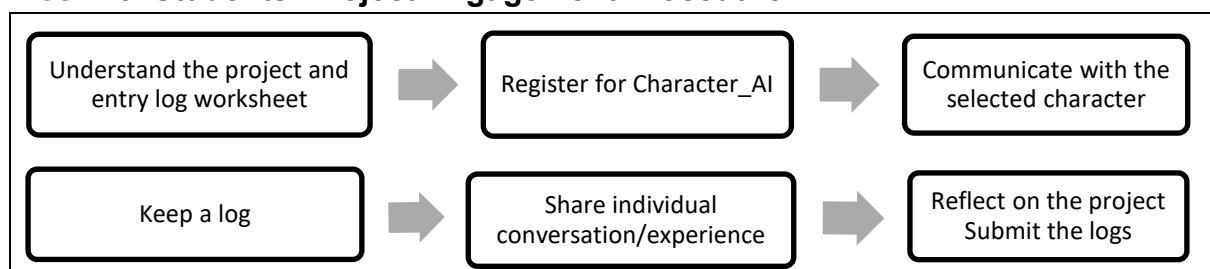
Based on the needs analysis results, an AI-centered project for the target participants was designed and developed.

In the project, students were given 15 minutes for each of the ten communications they held with the different characters they had selected. Among ten communication entries, five were required to be typed and the other five were required to be oral. Also, out of ten communication sessions, four topics were assigned for both typed and oral communication: hobbies and interests, food, travel and study abroad, and environmental problems. Typing communication served as their rehearsal for spoken communication.

Students were required to keep a log. A log worksheet (see Appendix) was provided to allow them to track each communication. Students were required to note the date and time duration; write about the character; write what they learned about the character (5–8 sentences); note any new vocabulary, expressions, and meanings (5–10 sentences); write a communication summary (60–80 words); and write comments about how they felt about the communication (in English [50 words or more] or Japanese [100 characters or more]). They were also asked to rate their level of enjoyment and level of difficulty for each communication (from 1 [= *least*] to 5 [= *most*]). Figure 3 presents an outline of the learners' engagement in the project, detailing the steps of interaction with the AI character and the learning outcomes.

Each student's communication experience was shared with their classmates, first in the form of casual conversations and then in a speech presented to the class. The log served as scaffolding for both the conversations and the speech performance to enhance the oral phase of their English skills.

**FIGURE 3. Students' Project Engagement Procedure**



### Phase II: Introduction

Phase II examined the effectiveness of the designed project. After the implementation of the developed material in the instruction, to examine the effectiveness of the project, two written questionnaires – one pre-instruction and one

post-project – were conducted. While instruction was conducted in English, all questionnaire items were presented in Japanese.

## Phase II: Method

Phase I consisted of first analyzing students’ needs, formulating a project framework based on needs analysis, and then implementing the project in the classroom setting. This was followed by data collection on participant engagement and perceptions.

In the implementation step, the instructor provided initial guidance, demonstrating the use of Character.AI and the process for completing the communication log. Phase II focused on analyzing the participants’ initial reactions. For the examination, this research primarily employed a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative surveys with Likert-type scales to assess student perceptions, motivations, and experiences with English learning and AI tools. The number of participants slightly fluctuated across the different surveys in Phase II due to student absences or incomplete responses in the logs. Consequently, the sample size varies between 17 and 22, depending on the specific data set analyzed. These numerical data were complemented with qualitative insights gathered through open-ended questions and student logs, revealing deeper impressions and causes behind observed trends. Together, these methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of an AI-centered English learning intervention.

## Phase II: Results 1

Figure 4 illustrates the diverse range of characters selected by students as their first Character.AI interlocutor.

The selection of characters made by the students spanned historical figures (Socrates, Darwin, Obama), tech leaders (Musk, Siri), and diverse fictional characters (Aqua, Sukuna, Gintoki). It spans philosophy, science, politics, and pop culture, encompassing real and imagined individuals with varied skills and personalities, from powerful leaders to comedic figures.

**FIGURE 4. Results for “Which Character Did You Select as the First Interlocutor?”**

Selected Characters		
	Psychologist	Darwin
Barack Obama	Miku Nakano	Nami
Gintoki Sakata (from Gintama)	Elon Musk	Sukuna
Hiroshi Higuruma	Socrates	Erwin
Touma Inumaru	Aqua	Siri

Table 9 presents the perceptions of 19 participants regarding the difficulty of typing-based communication with Character.AI for English language learning. A plurality of students (47.4%) disagreed that typing-based communication was easy, while 42.1% remained *neutral*. Only a small fraction (10.5%) *agreed*, and no participants selected *strongly agree* or *strongly disagree*.

**TABLE 9. Communication Difficulties with Typed Input**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
The typing-based communication was easy.	0 (0)	47.4 (9)	42.1 (8)	10.5 (2)	0 (0)

Note. *N* = 19. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 10 indicates that oral-based communication was perceived as more challenging than typing. A combined 36.9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that oral communication was easy. Notably, the majority (57.9%) remained neutral, and only one participant (5.3%) agreed with the statement. This suggests a general consensus that oral interaction presents a higher level of difficulty for learners.

**TABLE 10. Communication Difficulties with Oral Input**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
The oral-based communication was easy.	21.1 (4)	15.8 (3)	57.9 (11)	5.3 (1)	0 (0)

Note. *N* = 19. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Regarding communication breakdowns or misstatements with typed input, a combined 42.1% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that they experienced such issues (see Table 11). While this suggests that a significant portion of the group found the interaction relatively smooth, the remaining participants were divided between neutral (21.1%) and those who did experience difficulties (36.8% combined).

**TABLE 11. Participant Experiences with Typed Communication Breakdowns and Miscommunication**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Experienced communication breakdown or miscommunication.	10.5 (2)	31.6 (6)	21.1 (4)	26.3 (5)	10.5 (2)

Note. *N* = 19.

Regarding oral communication breakdowns or miscommunication, only a small minority of 5.3% of participants disagreed that they experienced such issues, with no one strongly disagreeing (see Table 12). While this suggests that almost all participants felt the interaction was not entirely flawless, a significant portion remained neutral (42.1%).

**TABLE 12. Participant Experiences with Oral Communication Breakdowns and Miscommunication**

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Experienced communication breakdown or miscommunication.	0 (0)	5.3 (1)	42.1 (8)	47.4 (9)	5.3 (1)

Note.  $N = 19$ . Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Meanwhile, a combined 52.7% of participants confirmed that they did experience difficulties (*agree* and *strongly agree* combined).

Figure 5 presents the specific causes of communication breakdowns from the students' perspectives, categorized by input method. For typed input, participants primarily attributed difficulties to their own linguistic limitations, such as low vocabulary levels, grammatical errors, and unclear questioning, while also noting the inherent limitations of interacting with an AI. Conversely, for oral input, the feedback was overwhelmingly centered on pronunciation issues. Students reported that poor pronunciation led to word recognition errors or the inability to convey their intended meaning. Additionally, some noted that the AI struggled to recognize proper nouns, converting them into similar-sounding words. These responses suggest that while typing difficulties are linked to general language proficiency, oral breakdowns are specifically driven by the challenges of phonetic accuracy and real-time speech production.

**FIGURE 5. Results for “Do You Know the Cause of the Communication Breakdown or Miscommunication?”**

Student Responses
<b>Typed Input</b>
My vocabulary level was low.
My use of English was bad.
Mistakes with spelling and grammar.
The way of asking question was not clear.
The interlocutor is AI so miscommunication occurs.
Do not know (2 responses).
<b>Oral Input</b>
My pronunciation was bad and different words came out, so I looked up the pronunciation and pronounced it correctly.
Because when it comes to speaking, grammar and usage suddenly become strange.
Because the pronunciation is different from natives.
My pronunciation was not good.
My own lack of pronunciation ability.
Proper nouns are probably not recognized and are converted into similar words.
There were many times when I could not say the content I wanted to speak.

Note.  $N = 19$ .

Table 13 illustrates the perceptions of AI-assisted English learning among 18 participants. The responses were categorized into five levels: *very positive*, *positive*, *neutral*, *negative*, and *very negative*. A significant majority (77.78%) expressed *positive* or *very positive* perceptions. *Neutral* responses accounted for 11.11%, while

*negative* and *very negative* responses each represented 5.56% of the total. Overall, the data suggests a generally favorable view of AI in English language learning.

**TABLE 13. Perceptions of AI-Assisted English Learning**

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative	Total
Frequency	5	9	2	1	1	18
Percentage	27.78	50.00	11.11	5.56	5.56	100.00

Note. N = 18. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Phase II: Results 2

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' evaluations of AI after completing the instructional module.

**TABLE 14. Feedback on English Communication Activity Using Character.AI**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Enjoyable	8	47.06
Very Enjoyable	7	41.18
Neither	1	5.88
Not Enjoyable	1	5.88
Total	17	100.00

Table 14 shows feedback on the English communication activity using Character.AI. The responses were categorized as *enjoyable*, *very enjoyable*, *neither*, and *not enjoyable*. A large majority of participants demonstrated high levels of engagement, with 47.06% selecting *enjoyable* and 41.18% selecting *very enjoyable*. Only a small fraction of participants responded with *neither* or *not enjoyable*, each at 5.88%.

**TABLE 15. Perceived Difficulty of Character.AI English Text Activity**

Difficulty Level	Frequency	Percentage
Appropriate	7	38.89
A Little Difficult	9	50.00
A Little Easy	2	11.11
Total	18	100.00

Table 15 presents the perceived difficulty of an English text activity using Character.AI. Out of 18 participants, 50% found the activity a little difficult, while 38.89% felt it was appropriate. Only 11.11% found it a little easy. This suggests that the activity leaned toward being slightly challenging for the majority of participants, with a notable portion finding it just right. Overall, the activity's difficulty was perceived as slightly above the ideal level for most learners.

Figure 6 lists students' impressions of using Character.AI. Overall, participants found the activity enjoyable, effectively improving both English skills and knowledge through personalized conversations. Exposure to spoken English was refreshing.

Engaging with familiar characters boosted motivation, and the ability to check spelling was valuable. Time management was a concern, with some desiring longer conversations and others finding it time-consuming. Technical support for Character.AI was also identified as a potential need.

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**FIGURE 6. Results for “What Are Your Impressions of Using Character.AI?”**

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“It was a fun opportunity to learn English.”

“I think asking what I want to know in English leads to improvement in both my English skills and knowledge. Also, since I choose my own conversation partner, I can learn about things I am interested in, which makes it easier to absorb.”

“It was refreshing to be able to experience spoken language and other aspects that are different from regular English.”

“I would like to talk longer.”

“It was fun to be able to talk while incorporating anime stories since it was a conversation with a character I knew. Also, the slightly different parts were interesting because I understood them since I knew the original character. I would like to try talking with various characters using chat AI at home as well. I thought it was good to be able to use English in a fun way.”

“I thought it took quite a long time.”

“I was able to enjoy English conversation. I was able to check the spelling.”

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## DISCUSSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This examination was conducted at a time when the meteoric rise of ChatGPT had captivated both the media and academia. Yet, for the target students, their use of ChatGPT was limited. Students displayed a degree of skepticism toward the efficacy of ChatGPT for English language learning, with some expressing negative views regarding its potential to facilitate their English language acquisition. In contrast, when introduced to Character.AI, even though none of the participants had ever used it, the examination showed a positive response toward a trial period using this specific platform for English learning.

During the initial phase of this project, learners began by registering for Character.AI accounts and configuring communication settings on their personal devices. Despite Generation Z’s general proficiency with technology, frequent technical support was required. Learners often encountered difficulties with specific tasks, including Character.AI registration and utilizing voice recognition features. As technology continues to evolve, educators must anticipate and prepare for the technical questions these learners will likely have.

Despite these initial technical challenges, a post-project questionnaire determined that the learners found the project to be a fun and engaging way to practice English. They especially appreciated the opportunity to incorporate their individual interests, such as anime, into conversations. They felt it helped improve their speaking skills and knowledge by allowing them to ask questions and learn about topics they cared about. While some enjoyed the length, others wished for longer sessions, and some found the duration to be quite long.

While high student engagement during in-class sessions suggests initial motivation, sustained progress with AI learning tools, especially during breaks,

requires more than just an introduction to the tool. It was observed that even with high in-class engagement, log completion rates stagnated during a 10-day holiday period. This indicates that in-class guidance and peer-sharing activities are crucial for encouraging ongoing learning and need to serve as more than just an initial introduction. To maximize the benefits of these tools and maintain student motivation, it would be beneficial to thoroughly examine longer time effects and continue refining the types of in-class activities provided by observing the learners' engagement, comments, and worksheet outcomes. Doing so would help ensure that this approach offers a strong framework for continued engagement, even when direct supervision is absent.

A particularly noteworthy finding is the significant shift in students' perceptions regarding the efficacy of AI for developing speaking skills. In the pre-instructional stage, although a strong majority (81%) identified speaking as the skill they most desired to improve, only a minimal 9.1% anticipated that AI-centered learning would actually help them enhance this specific skill. This initial skepticism, likely rooted in their lack of prior experience with AI for language learning, was significantly revised following project implementation. The post-project feedback revealed that students not only enjoyed the personalized interaction with their chosen characters but also felt a genuine sense of improvement in their speaking ability and confidence. This positive alteration in the affective domain suggests that AI-centered instruction can bridge the gap between learners' perceived weaknesses and their initial expectations of technology. By effectively addressing these gaps, the instruction transformed a previously daunting skill into an engaging and achievable learning goal.

## **CONCLUSION**

Concerns about AI use continue to be discussed in the field of education. Such concerns include the possibility of AI replacing human interaction, academic dishonesty, and misuse of AI tools. Taking these concerns into consideration, this project was carefully designed to provide students with a stepping stone to human interaction during their study abroad program by providing each student with individualized English communication practice. This practice was intended to help them prepare for future face-to-face communication experiences while reinforcing the learners' four language skills and vocabulary building.

The purpose of this pedagogical examination was to investigate and assess the target students' affective variables toward English learning combined with AI use and to serve as an introduction to AI-centered instruction that would help the instructor to develop and design tailored pedagogical material to optimize the final phase of English learning for the target students prior to their departure. This examination started with a needs analysis, continued with the development and design of the project and pedagogical materials (worksheet), then finished with project implementation and a summary. The needs analysis revealed that the learners' self-perception was that their active English skills of speaking and writing were the weakest. However, they wanted

to build their English skills, and of the four skills, possessed a strong desire to improve their speaking.

The target learners demonstrated a willingness to try AI for English practice, and the positive response encouraged the instructor to use AI as the core of the project. The presented data revealed a positive shift in students' affective domain after implementing the AI-centered English language instruction. This suggests that the AI project had a positive influence on students' attitudes, motivation, and emotional engagement with English language learning. A participant commented that even after the assignment, she continued to communicate daily with the AI character as part of her daily routine.

The results further indicate that communication breakdowns were mode-specific: typed errors stemmed from limited vocabulary, while oral errors were driven by pronunciation. Consequently, AI-centered instruction should offer tailored support, specifically phonetic training for speech tasks and lexical reinforcement for text-based interactions.

This study aligns closely with the TPACK framework by integrating AI technology (Character.AI) into English language instruction. It addresses pedagogical goals by designing an AI-centered project to enhance communication skills and student engagement, especially for those weak in speaking. By analyzing student perceptions of AI use for English learning, the study demonstrates the interconnectedness of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. The tailored project demonstrates that the successful integration of generative AI into the EFL classroom relies not just on the tool itself but on the synergistic interplay between technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK). By aligning Character.AI's capabilities with specific communication goals and structured classroom activities, this study provides a robust pedagogical framework for educators to effectively navigate the complexities of AI-mediated instruction.

Continually seeking ways to use AI applications for the purpose of English language instruction and keeping up with advances in technology are among the many duties of the educator. This examination served as one model for incorporating AI into classroom-based instruction. The positive outcome of this study suggests that this project is a potential model for developing further pedagogical material using AI.

## **THE AUTHOR**

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## APPENDIX

### Project Reports (Worksheet): Character.AI Communication Log

**Total 10 Communication Logs**  
**Log Nos. 1–5 → Written (typing) communication**  
**Log Nos. 6–10 → Oral (voicing) communication**  
**★ Spend at least 15 minutes for each communication**

**Communication Topics**  
**1. Hobbies and Interests 2. Food 3. Travel & Study Abroad**  
**4. Environmental Problems 5. (Free Topic)**

**Submission Deadline: \_\_\_\_\_,**  
**Print out, staple (left corner), and submit.**  
**Title page: Student ID, Name, Course title, Submission date)**

Log No. 1	Typing	Communication Topic: Hobbies and Interests	
Character:		Communication Date: 2024. __. __	
		Time: __: __ ~ __: __	
Findings about the character (5–8 sentences)			
New vocabulary and expressions, and meanings (5–10 sentences):			
Communication Summary (60–80words)			
Comments (How did you feel about the communication? English: 50+ words / Japanese: 100+ chars.)			
Enjoyment Level (1 [least] – 5 [most]): ____			
Difficulty Level (1 [least] – 5 [most]): ____			

### Communication Details

(Highlights/All, cut and copy, or screen shots)



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# The Common Language Model of Virtual Exchange and Its Effect on Self-Efficacy and Communication Confidence

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This study investigated the impact of a common language model (CLM) virtual exchange (VE) between university students in Japan and Korea on their self-efficacy, self-perceived communication competence (SPCC), and communication anxiety (CA) while using English as a foreign language. The VE occurred within three class sessions with a single synchronous task between the universities. The instructors collected quantitative and qualitative data through pre- and post-VE surveys that included Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. The study employed *t* tests, convergence analysis, and qualitative analysis to interpret the results through the lens of social cognitive theory. Students had statistically significant increases in self-efficacy and communication confidence (SPCC and negative CA) after the VE experience. Students felt more capable of making videos, writing comments, and conversing in English with foreigners. The qualitative data analysis reinforced these findings, with many students attributing changes in self-efficacy, SPCC, and CA to their ability to communicate effectively with foreign peers. While limited in scope, the results suggest that the CLM can provide meaningful benefits for language learners' communication-related self-belief and anxiety. Language instructors with limited class time should consider their own CLM VE.

**Keywords:** virtual exchange, self-efficacy, common language model, self-perceived communication competence, anxiety

## INTRODUCTION

Virtual exchanges (VEs) are technology-enabled interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, geographically separated, relying on synchronous (e.g., video calls) or asynchronous (e.g., emails or forums) communication (EVOLVE, n.d.). VEs promote language acquisition through negotiation of meaning strategies (Clavel Arroitia, 2019), irrespective of linguistic backgrounds or native/non-native speaker pairings (Wang, 2004). Synchronous and asynchronous exchanges have shown similar results in language acquisition as face-

to-face exchanges (Blake, 2011; Sotillo, 2000; Yanguas, 2010; Zeigler, 2016). VEs have increased students' confidence in English communication skills (Mestre-Segarra & Ruiz-Garrido, 2022; O'Dowd, 2021), oral skills, and motivation to learn English (Canals, 2020). Additionally, VEs enable students to develop digital literacy, cross-cultural understanding, collaboration skills, creativity (Wicking, 2022), and intercultural competence (Hackett et al., 2023). VEs have also shifted students' perceptions of English from a subject of study to a means of communication (O'Dowd, 2021).

Previous VE studies have shown that language acquisition benefits often require students to analyze or reflect on their VE conversations, identify gaps, and learn the target language's vocabulary or grammatical structures (Shibata, 2023). While this process aligns with second-language acquisition theory (Ellis, 2017), it can be time-consuming and challenging for students with lower language proficiency. This paper focuses on a very short VE and introduces the common language model (CLM). To determine if a brief, three-session VE benefits foreign language (L2) learners, it considers the variables of communication confidence (CC) and self-efficacy. CC is a strong predictor of an individual's likelihood to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Samvati & Golaghaei, 2017; Yashima, 2002) and is measured using self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and communication anxiety (CA; Yashima, 2002). Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1997). Changes in these perceptions can lead to changes in behavior (Bandura, 1997; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988).

This study, conducted at two universities in Japan and Korea, investigates whether students' responses to SE, SPCC, and CA items change during the VE. To understand the effects of this VE on L2 learners, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and interpreted through a social cognitive theory lens to answer the following research question:

RQ1. How does a CLM VE impact the self-efficacy, self-perceived communication competence, and communication anxiety of EFL learners?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Common Language Model of VE**

VE and online intercultural exchange (OIE) are interchangeable umbrella terms. Within that umbrella are specific models of VE. These include eTandem or teletandem, which are bilingual, bicultural exchanges with an equal emphasis on both languages where the students are both learners and experts (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016). The telecollaboration model is often bilingual and bicultural, emphasizing intercultural communication competence. It may include cultural comparisons or discussing cultural artifacts (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016). The transnational model uses a lingua franca and includes collaboration, critical reflection, and active contributions to global

society (O'Dowd, 2021). Institution-specific VEs, such as collaborative online international learning (COIL), often blend telecollaboration and transnational models. Finally, the critical approach model involves discussions on social and political issues using a lingua franca or non-native speakers to deepen understanding and promote equality (Helm, 2013).

While existing VE models such as eTandem, telecollaboration, and transnational approaches provide valuable frameworks, they often overlook a distinct type of exchange: one that is brief, task-oriented, and conducted entirely in a shared lingua franca. This study proposes the term “common language model” (CLM) to describe such exchanges. The CLM prioritizes language practice and communicative competence over intercultural exploration. Although it shares similarities with the eTandem model, especially in its focus on language acquisition, it differs by forgoing bilingual reciprocity in favor of a single shared language. Its short duration and structured, information-focused tasks may reduce cognitive and linguistic load, thereby increasing accessibility (Mayer & Fiorella, 2021). However, these same features may limit opportunities for deeper intercultural engagement, as interactions tend to remain surface-level (Dooly & Vinagre, 2022). Based on cognitive load theory (Mayer & Fiorella, 2021) and prior discussions of task complexity in VE (Dooly & Vinagre, 2022), such simplified structures are theoretically more manageable for lower-proficiency learners. To date, no empirical studies have examined the CLM as a distinct VE model. Thus, any observed gains in self-efficacy or communication confidence in this study provide preliminary evidence of its potential benefits despite its inherent limitations.

## **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social cognitive theory (SCT) was developed by Albert Bandura as a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behavior (Bandura, 1997). The key concepts are observational learning, reciprocal determinism, self-efficacy (SE), and reinforcements. SE is a crucial determinant of behavior, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a specific task (Bandura, 1997). SE is a primary factor for student engagement in language learning and classroom tasks (Phipps, 2023). SE has been used in education and language acquisition for four decades, with numerous studies showing the correlations between SE and language learning achievement (Wang & Sun, 2020).

SE is more likely to predict behavior than actual ability (Bandura, 1997; Mills, 2014; Wyatt, 2022). The development of SE is influenced by mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states, with mastery experiences being the most significant (Bandura, 1997; Wyatt, 2022). For a task to be considered a mastery experience, the individual must perceive it as challenging and successfully complete it. Conversely, failure can lower SE, especially for those with initially low SE or limited prior experiences (Bandura, 1997).

SE scales assess individuals' beliefs about their ability to complete specific tasks (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Measuring students' SE pre-VE can provide insights into their initial perceptions of a task's difficulty. Changes in an individual's perceptions can be interpreted based on their exposure to mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). SPCC and CA also depend on an individual's perceptions, allowing them to be interpreted similarly.

## **Communication Confidence**

Communication confidence (CC) is defined as an individual's self-perceived communication competence (SPCC) and lack of communication anxiety (CA; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). CC predicts willingness to communicate (WTC) and foreign language enjoyment (Fushino, 2010; Yashima, 2002; Zhang et al., 2024). SPCC measures an individual's belief in their ability to communicate in various situations (Leeming et al., 2024). People with higher SPCC communicate more frequently (Balouchi & Samad, 2021; Leeming et al., 2024; Samvati & Golaghaei, 2017).

Communication anxiety, also known as communication apprehension, measures an individual's frequency of nervousness in various situations (McCroskey, 2009). Arnold and Brown (1999) identified anxiety as the main factor interfering with the learning process and the most common learning disorder. Students with reduced CA often experience positive impacts on their academic achievement, regardless of their academic ability (Kim & Choi, 2023). Hashimoto (2002) found a significant negative correlation between CA and SPCC, supporting Yashima's (2002) model for CC and WTC.

Three recent studies suggest a positive change is likely in CC post-VE. (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022; Remmerswaal et al., 2025; Zhou, 2023). In Remmerswaal et al. (2025), students from Japan, Türkiye, and Spain participated in a classroom-integrated COIL VE. Students collaborated in groups of six or seven and created two reports and a video suggesting changes that promote Sustainable Development Goals on their campuses and communities. Students' average SPCC increased, and their CA decreased when speaking to strangers, such as their COIL group members. The other two studies focused on WTC, which correlates to CC (Yashima, 2002). They both used an eTandem model. Those students with English proficiency of CEFR B1–B2 (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022) and IELTS 6.0 or above (Zhou, 2023) participated in an exchange for several weeks. At its conclusion, those in the VE saw a more significant increase in their WTC and speaking skills than the control group. The VEs in all three cases were longer than those in the present study, and the language proficiency of the students involved was higher.

## METHOD

The authors conducted a pilot version of this study in June 2023 with 24 students in Japan and 16 in Korea. The results were not statistically significant, but the changes in SE, SPCC, and CA, along with teacher observations, led to the implementation of the current study.

### Participants

The VE included 244 students from a small Japanese university and 190 from a small Korean university. This study did not collect data on age, gender, or cultural differences. The approximate English proficiency ranged from A1–B1 on the CEFR scale (Qualitative Aspects of Spoken Language Use, 2023), with the majority of students in the A2 range as determined through instructor observations. Students were in one of nine English communication classes taught by a single instructor in Korea and one of three instructors in Japan. Teachers and classes were selected based on class schedules and the instructor's willingness to participate in the study. The pairing of Japanese and Korean students was based on similar English proficiency levels, overlapping class times that allowed for synchronous video calls during class time, and the existing professional relationship between the authors.

Regarding survey completion, of the Japanese participants, 111 students completed pre- and post-VE surveys. Of those, we removed 24, as they had participated in the pilot study, and their responses could skew results. The remaining 87 students from Japan are present in this study. Among the 87 participants, 26 did not participate in the synchronous call due to a miscommunication regarding the call date. An additional 26 reported they did not participate in a five-minute call due to excessive background noise, microphone interference, or being unable to connect with their group. In Korea, 114 respondents consented to participate and completed both surveys, and 14 reported issues with the video call (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1. Participant Numbers by Stage**

Stage	Japan	Korea
Quantitative data	87	114
Qualitative open-ended questions	87	0
Qualitative perceptions on excitement and nervousness	0	114
Total participants	244	190

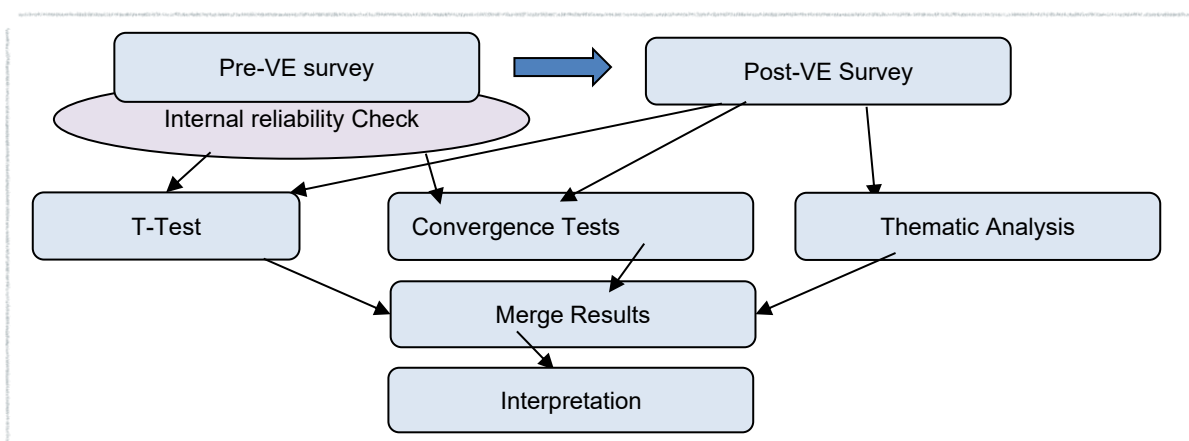
### Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods convergent design, where quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and subsequently analyzed together (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The quantitative data offers a broad overview of the overall trends among students, while the qualitative data provides more detailed insights into those trends. The quantitative data comes from two questionnaires containing three scales with

Likert-type items. These surveys (pre- and post-VE) allowed the authors to calculate any statistically significant changes in SE, SPCC, and CA. This data was also analyzed using  $\beta$ - and  $\sigma$ -convergence, inspired by Barro and Sala-i-Martin (1992). The authors analyzed which students were the most likely to see an increase or decrease in their quantitative answers ( $\beta$ -convergence) and whether the dispersion of SE, SPCC, and CA decreased ( $\sigma$ -convergence) or increased. The authors gathered qualitative data from open-ended question responses in the post-VE survey. These SE, SPCC, and CA changes were analyzed through the lens of SCT, specifically the four influences of SE and the initial strength of students' beliefs in their abilities.

Figure 1 illustrates the research design and the interaction between statistical techniques used for quantitative and qualitative analysis. The surveys were administered in Japanese and Korean for their respective countries, with most students responding in that language and some responding in English. Student responses were translated as necessary into English via DeepL.com and reviewed by the authors for accuracy. Both institutions provided the authors with ethical approval, and this study contains data from students who voluntarily consented to participate.

**FIGURE 1. Research Design**



The pre-VE survey data was tested for internal reliability and compared to the post-VE data using paired samples *t* tests. We then calculated the convergence values to determine if  $\beta$ -convergence and  $\sigma$ -convergence occurred. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both authors thematically categorized the qualitative data and reached a consensus on discrepancies.

## Instruments and Data Collection

### Self-Efficacy

The authors created items to measure students' SE across the seven VE tasks (see Table 2). This six-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (*definitely cannot*) to 6 (*definitely can*). The authors chose a six-point scale to exclude a neutral option, which is more likely to have a normal distribution than a four-point scale (Leung, 2011).

## **SPCC**

This study employs the 12-item scale used by Hashimoto (2002) to assess SPCC across 12 scenarios. These scenarios are categorized by four group sizes (public speaking with 30 people, talking in meetings with ten people, talking in small groups with five people, and talking in dyads). Additionally, there are three types of participants (strangers, acquaintances, and friends). Similar to Remmerswaal et al. (2025), this study used a five-point Likert scale with written descriptions to remove the ambiguity of the 100-point scale used by Hashimoto (2002). The Likert statements ranged from 1 (*I would never or almost never feel competent*) to 5 (*I would always or almost always feel competent*).

## **CA**

The CA scale is Hashimoto's (2002) modification of the SPCC scale, where students rank the same 12 situations on how likely they were to feel anxious rather than competent. This study used a Likert scale with items that ranged from 1 (*I would never or almost never feel nervous*) to 5 (*I would always or almost always feel nervous*).

## **Context and Data Collection**

Before the VE began, students completed the pre-VE survey. The first assignment used Flip.com, where each class and its pair from the other university shared a page. Students could only see videos and comments of the members assigned by the instructors. Students created a self-introduction video and posted it to Flip.com. The videos were between 45–90 seconds long. Students had an additional week to write at least three comments on the videos of students from the other institution. The second task was similar. A month after the first video, students created and uploaded a bucket-list video, this time 60–90 seconds long. Again, they had a week to complete their comments and replies. These videos allowed students to learn about and get accustomed to each other's accents in a low-stakes, asynchronous setting.

The third task was a video call. Students were assigned to groups, and those in Japan emailed a Teams call invite to their group members in Korea. Instructors chose meeting times when at least 15 minutes of class time overlapped with the pair class to conduct the five-minute video calls, allowing 10 minutes for unforeseen connectivity issues. These simultaneous calls were designed for one device per student, each using earphones, with the goal of authentic language use. However, some students formed groups with nearby students due to difficulties with email and absences. To account for these issues, the post-VE survey asked whether they had participated in a five-minute video call and, if not, why. The post-VE survey was completed in the class following the synchronous call. Both Japanese and Korean students completed the same quantitative surveys. Due to an administrative oversight, the students in Korea did not respond to the open-ended questions related to SE, SPCC, or CA. However, they reflected on what had excited them or made them

nervous in the exchange. These responses had some overlap with the open-ended Japanese responses which is seen in the Discussion.

**TABLE 2. Study Timeline**

Phase	Activity
Pre-task	Pre-VE survey
Task 1	Introduction video and comments
Task 2	Bucket list video and comments
Task 3	5-minute video call
Post-task	Post-VE survey

## RESULTS

The quantitative data results had high internal reliability, with Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  point estimates all above .90 (see Appendices A–C). Regarding the open-ended questions, the Korean-based students were most excited about the cultural exchange, social interaction, and the chance to use English authentically. Speaking English was also the area that made students the most worried, followed by challenges related to technology. Table 3 summarizes the information, and representative quotes from these responses are included, as appropriate, in the SE, SPCC, and CA sections below.

**TABLE 3. Korea-Based Students Excited and Nervous Post-VE**

Excited		<i>n</i> = 114
Language – Speaking		19
Language – Listening		2
Cultural Exchange		22
Social Interaction		20
Personal Achievement		1
Other		50
Total		114
Worried		<i>n</i> = 114
Language – Speaking		26
Language – Pronunciation		6
Language – Vocabulary		1
Technological Challenges		9
Social Interaction		5
Cultural Exchange		4
Other		50
None		13
Total		114

### Self-Efficacy

SE increased significantly (see Appendix D) in all seven statements (see Table 4). Figure 2 shows how the average student began near a 4 (*maybe I can*) and progressed to near a 5 (*I can*) statement.

**TABLE 4. Self-Efficacy Likert Descriptors**

Statement 1	Make a video to introduce myself to foreigners.
Statement 2	Understand another person’s self-introduction video.
Statement 3	Comment on English videos made by people in another country.
Statement 4	Make a video about my life experience.
Statement 5	Understand a video describing another person’s life experience.
Statement 6	Participate in a 5-minute conversation in English with people from another country.
Statement 7	Understand a 5-minute conversation in English with people from another country.

**FIGURE 2. Self-Efficacy Pre-VE and Post-VE**

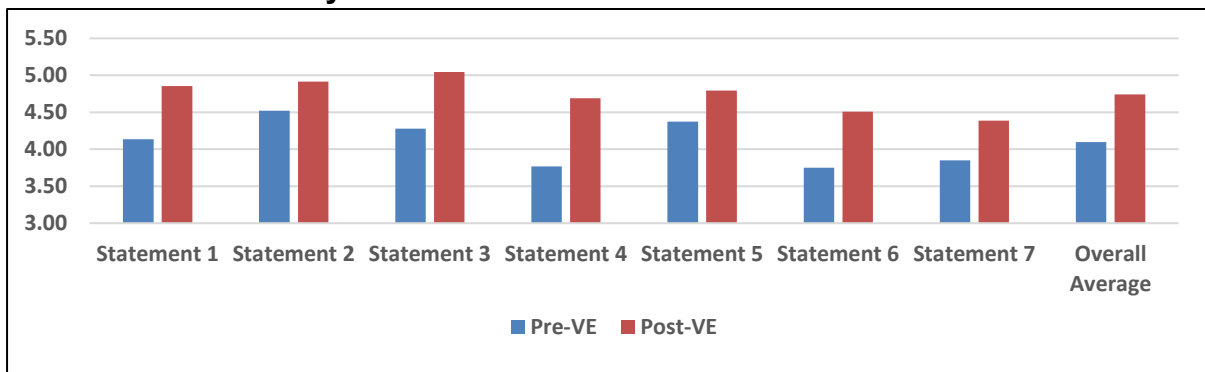
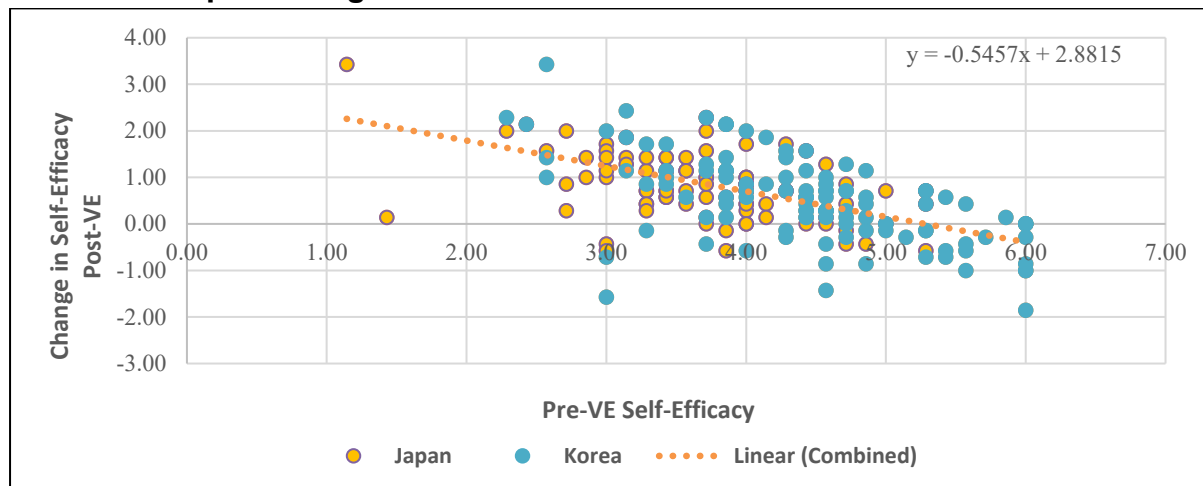


Figure 3 demonstrates the difference in SE post-COIL compared to initial SE levels. The x-axis represents the pre-COIL SE of each individual, and the y-axis is the change that occurred, calculated as post-COIL SE minus pre-COIL SE. Any increases in SE are shown as a positive y value, and any decreases are a negative y value. Those who began with the lowest SE are the most likely to have increased their SE. The x-intercept is 5.28 (above *I can*), which indicates that students who began with SPCC above 5.28 were the most likely to see a decrease in their SE post-COIL. Within Figure 3, most students increased and only a few, primarily Korean students, saw a decrease. The trend is represented by the line of best fit labeled Linear. The negative slope of the line of best fit demonstrates a  $\beta$ -Convergence (Barro & Sala-i-Martin, 1992). Moreover, there is  $\sigma$ -convergence because the standard deviation fell from 0.887 to 0.805, which indicates a fall of dispersion across students’ SE. Hence, students converged toward a central point.

**FIGURE 3. SE  $\beta$ -Convergence**



Note. Linear is a line that best fits the Japanese and Korean university data.

**TABLE 5. Reasons for the Presence or Absence of a Change in Self-Efficacy**

<b>SE Increased (76% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 66</b>
Communication skills increased	12
Successfully communicated with foreigners	10
English class activities	3
Asked many questions	2
More capable now	2
Vocabulary increased	2
Willingness to communicate increased	2
Communication anxiety decreased	2
Motivation to learn increased	2
Making videos/comments	9
Other	9
No reason	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>SE Did Not Increase (24% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 21</b>
Need more practice	1
No change, but a good experience	1
Relied on gestures rather than English	1
Lack of understanding in the call	1
Listening skills have decreased since high school	1
No reason	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

Note. One student provided multiple reasons, resulting in more positive comments than participants.

Table 5 summarizes the open-ended questions asking students if they felt a positive or negative change in their ability to complete each statement. The majority of students (76%) indicated an increase in SE, and most attributed the increase to successful communication with foreigners, with one student noting, “There was a big change. Starting a conversation with a foreigner online was a big hurdle, but I enjoyed doing it this time” (JP038). Others felt their communication skills had increased, with a student stating, “I feel it because I can recall the English, I have learned so far by thinking about manuscripts, etc.” (JP050). There were no common reasons for a lack

of increase. However, some students mentioned a need for more practice, with one stating, “I feel that I need more practical English practice” (JP030), or implied that communication went poorly, with a student commenting, “I relied on gestures rather than English” (JP053).

### SPCC

As seen in Figure 4, all areas of SPCC increased with significant statistical significance in all categories as a group and for each country (see Appendix E). On this five-point scale, the average student pre-VE had SPCC in *Public* (30 people) and *Stranger* near the midpoint. As the number of people decreased and the amount of familiarity increased, so did SPCC pre- and post-VE.

FIGURE 4. SPCC Pre-VE and Post-VE

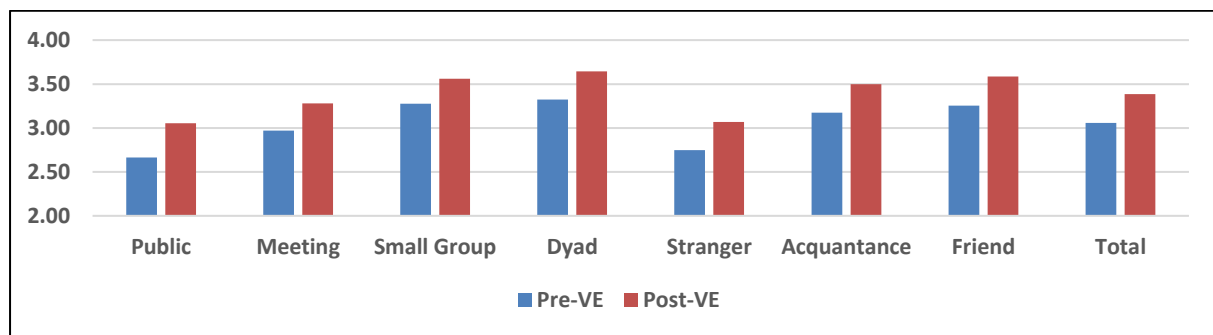
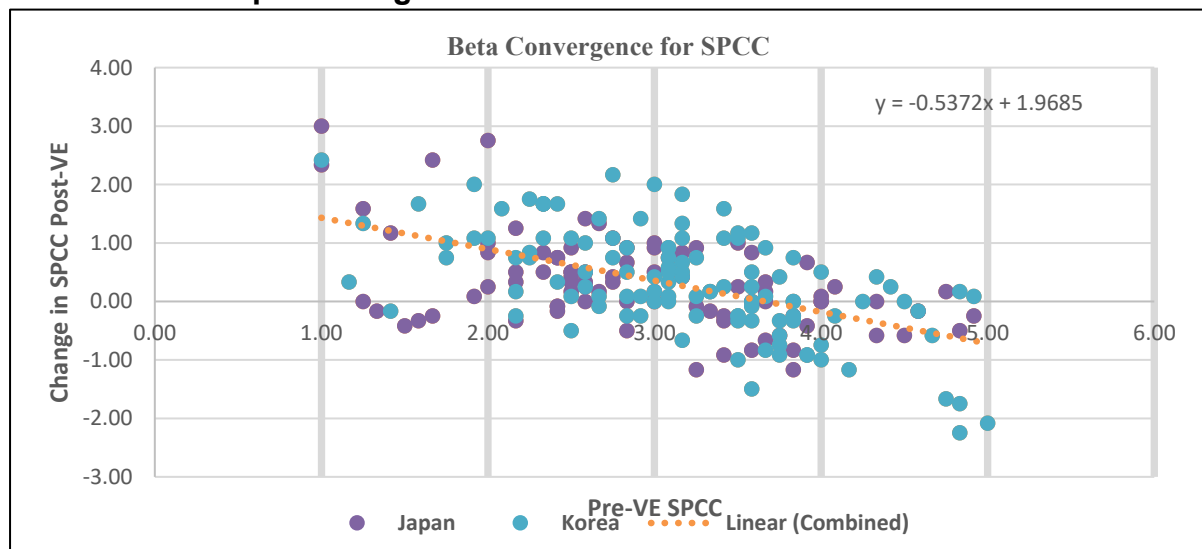


FIGURE 5. SPCC  $\beta$ -Convergence



Note. Linear is a line that best fits the Japanese and Korean university data.

In Figure 5, the  $\beta$ -convergence shows that students who began with a low SPCC were most likely to see an increase post-VE; in this case, students below an initial 3.66 (near *mostly feel competent*) SPCC score. Those above 3.66 initially were likely to see a decrease in their SPCC post-VE. The dispersion across students' SPCC fell from a standard deviation of 0.845 to 0.773, indicating an  $\sigma$ -convergence. Once

again, the students with the lowest SPCC were the most likely to see a benefit, and the gap between students shrank.

Table 6 summarizes students' responses to whether they felt more competent in the situations described in the Likert-type survey. The majority of respondents felt an increased competence (68%), and the most common reason was the same as that for SE: a feeling that communication skills increased, so that they now felt more competent. One student stated, "I feel that my communication skills have improved. When I was conversing with Korean students, I was able to keep the conversation going" (JP025). Another wrote, "I feel it has improved. Because I was able to improve my ability to converse in English even if we don't understand each other's language" (JP009). Another student remarked, "Because I am now able to improvise conversations" (JP037). The most common reason SPCC did not change was due to an inability to join the synchronous video call, followed by the feeling that their skills were unchanged, with one student noting, "I have only done it once, so I don't feel the effect, but I think I will be able to feel it if I continue" (JP032).

**TABLE 6. Reasons for the Presence or Absence of a Change in SPCC**

<b>SPCC Increased (68% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 59</b>
Communication skills increased	21
Successfully communicated with foreigners	17
Class activities	5
Videos	3
Confidence increased	2
Many conversations	2
Other	9
No reason	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>SPCC Did Not Increase (32% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 28</b>
Unable to participate in call	5
Communication skills unchanged	4
Difficulty communicating	2
Low communication skills	2
Always skilled at communication	1
Need more experience	1
Anxious speaking with strangers	1
No reason	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

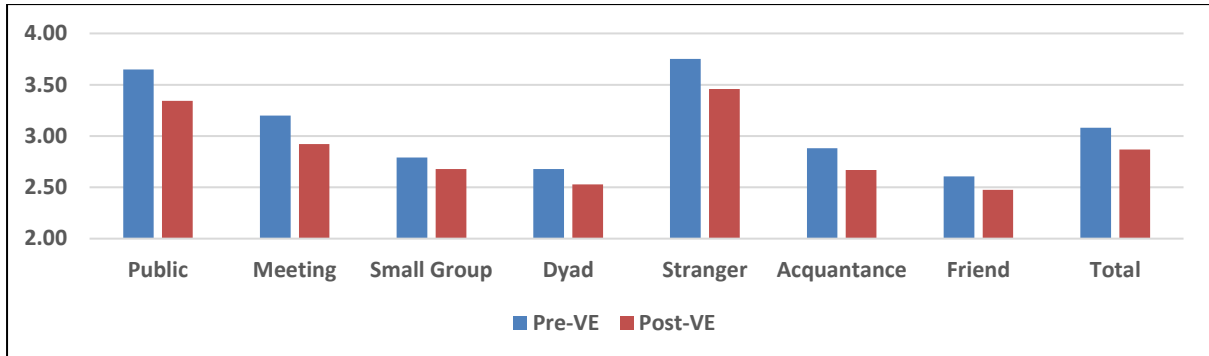
*Note:* One student provided multiple reasons, resulting in more positive comments than participants.

## CA

Decreases in CA, as shown in Figure 6, were statistically significant for the group in all areas, excluding *Small Group*, *Dyad*, and *Friend* (see Appendix F). Changes for Japanese students, however, were not statistically significant for any item, while changes for Korean students were statistically significant for all items (see Appendix F). As the number of people decreased and the level of familiarity with the other people increased, anxiety decreased pre- and post-VE. The Total average

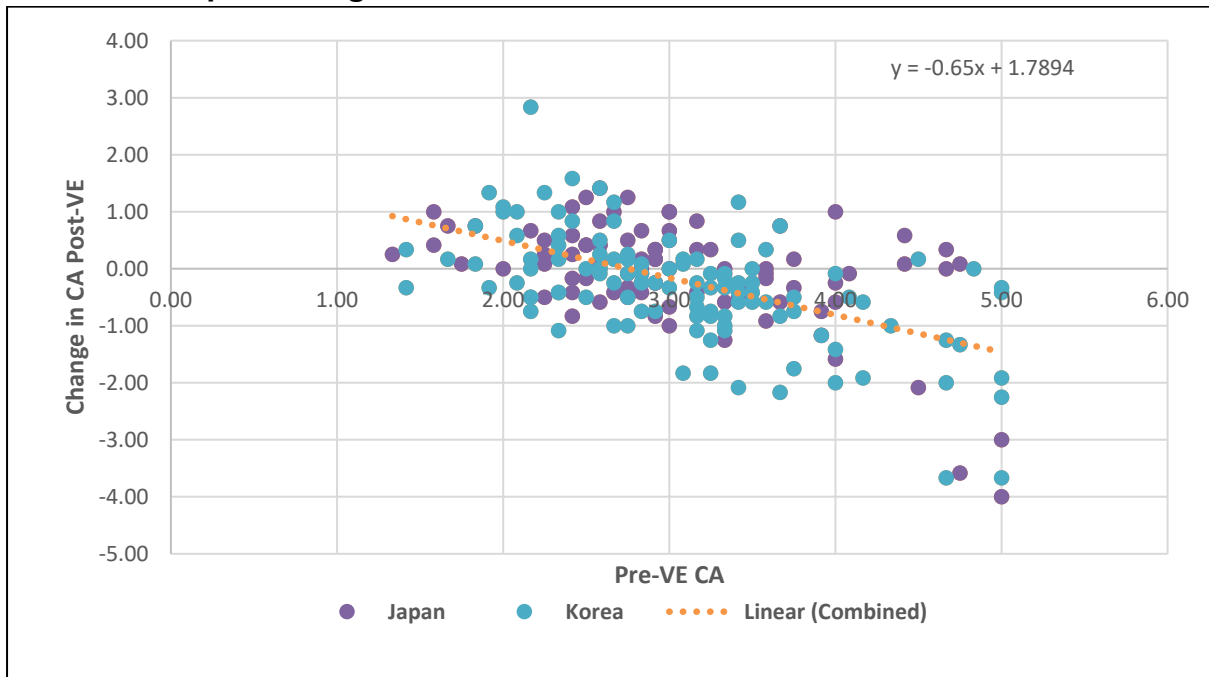
began above a score of *Sometimes nervous* and decreased to just below *Sometimes nervous*.

**FIGURE 6. CA Pre-VE and Post-VE**



In Figure 7, the  $\beta$ -convergence shows that students who began with high feelings of anxiety were the most likely to see a decrease in CA, with the most anxious students seeing the most significant decrease in CA. Those who began the VE with an average CA below 2.75 were the most likely to see an increase in CA post-VE. The dispersion across students' CA slightly fell from a standard deviation of 0.841 to 0.840, indicating a limited  $\sigma$ -convergence.

**FIGURE 7. CA  $\beta$ -Convergence**



Note. Linear is a line that best fits the Japanese and Korean university data.

Table 7 lists reasons for a change, or lack thereof, in CA post-VE. Most students connected the decrease to successful communication with foreigners, similar to the reasons given for SE and SPSS. One student stated, “I feel it has decreased. The reason is because I am getting used to it” (JP014). Students also listed class activities and having many opportunities as primary reasons for a change in CA: “Now that the

project is completed, I feel less nervous in the above situations. Because I don't get so stuck when talking to new people anymore" (JP024). The most common reason for a lack of change was that students were still nervous, followed by a desire to have more opportunities to speak with foreign students. One student noted, "When I am alone with someone I don't know, I can't keep the conversation going, and it becomes awkward" (JP080). Another commented, "Because I have had many conversations with close friends and not so many with less familiar acquaintances or people I have never met before" (JP061). One student in Korea mentioned, "I was worried that I wouldn't be able to say anything, but instead I was able to lead the conversation" (KR100).

**TABLE 7. Reasons for the Presence or Absence of a Change in CA**

<b>CA Decreased (53% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 46</b>
Successfully communicated with foreigners	14
Class activities	5
Many opportunities to communicate	4
Being prepared	2
Especially in small groups of strangers	2
Less nervous	2
Making videos	3
Other	8
No reason	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>CA Did Not Decrease (47% of Respondents)</b>	<b>n = 41</b>
Still nervous	10
Need more opportunities	5
Not skilled at conversation	2
Never nervous	2
Other	9
No reason	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

## DISCUSSION

Despite the limited tasks and time, students saw statistically significant increases in SE and CC. These results suggest that a CLM VE can benefit students with low L2 proficiency despite limited interactions with international peers. These quantitative results in CC surpass those of Remmerswaal et al. (2025), which saw increases in several SPCC items and a single CA item despite that study's longer and more engaging activities. These results also align with the previous work of Rahami and Fathi (2022) and Zhou (2023), suggesting that CLM positively affects students despite few and limited interactions.

The CLM appears to have the greatest effect on students near the extremes, beginning with either low or high SPCC or CA pre-VE, as demonstrated by the  $\beta$ -convergences and aligned with Remmerswaal et al.'s (2025) findings. SE is an exception, as only a few students saw decreased SE post-VE. Interpreting these changes in students largely depends on whether students experienced an increase,

experienced a decrease, or remained relatively unchanged post-VE. Below, we interpret these changes through a self-efficacy lens, as Bandura's (1997) SCT describes.

Students who saw an increase in SE and CC (SPCC and reverse scored CA; a change of 0.5 or higher) often began with a lower initial score. These students likely attributed their success in the VE to their personal efforts, with their CC, or their ability to complete tasks at a higher level than they had previously experienced, enhancing their perceptions (Bandura, 1997; Wyatt, 2022). Student KR021 captures this: "I was worried if I could do it, but it was an interesting time to challenge myself." KR027 had a similar sentiment: "I think it helped me gain confidence in speaking and listening English." Moreover, JP014 wrote, "I found out how good I am by actually doing it."

Many students reported difficulty with technology, yet still saw increases in SPCC and decreases in CA. One explanation for increased CC, despite difficulties with technology, could be that students who did not participate in the call observed their peers being successful and felt they would have been successful, otherwise known as a vicarious experience (Bandura, 1997). However, the SPCC and CA scales have items where students imagine speaking in meetings of 10 people and groups of 30 people, an experience no one had in this VE. Increases in these categories could be due to social persuasion, as all the teachers praised their students for participating in the video calls. Additionally, the teachers' praise and the project's completion may have resulted in a general positive mood, which enhances perceptions of ability (Bandura, 1997). Unfortunately, praise and a positive emotional state are unlikely to change student perceptions in the long term (Bandura, 1997; Wyatt, 2022). A follow-up study would be necessary to determine if these changes are maintained. For students whose CC increased, they are likely to participate in future communication opportunities more frequently (Balouchi & Samad, 2021; Clément et al., 1980; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988; Samvati & Golaghaei, 2017).

Another group of students is those with little to no change in these traits (a change below 0.5 but above -0.5). These students likely did not perceive themselves as using the traits, possibly due to technical issues, or did not attribute success to their effort (Wyatt, 2022). For example, creating two videos and replying to others via Microsoft Teams may not have changed their perceptions of competence when speaking to others. The length of the VE may have played a role. Even without technical issues, the single video call is limited. KR008 expressed this sentiment: "I think more chances should be given for class," and JP011 stated, "5 minutes is too short." While other factors likely explain why some students saw little to no change, wanting more interactions with international peers is a positive outcome for the CLM. These students would likely be willing to participate in another VE.

The third group consisted of students who saw decreased CC or SE (a change below -0.5). These decreases are potentially concerning, as decreases in CC can lead to reduced participation in conversations (Balouchi & Samad, 2021). The number of previous experiences pre-VE largely determines the strength of the students' perceptions. If these expectations were based on numerous rich experiences, a

decrease would signify a significant failure in the student's mind (Bandura, 1997). Conversely, if a student's expectations were based on limited experience or minimal reflection on past experiences, a change in perceptions would be relatively easy, as these perceptions were still developing (Bandura, 1997). Neither survey collected data on past experiences, yet students from both universities commented that it was their first time or a rare opportunity to speak with a foreigner (JP019, JP052, JP063, KR006, KR012, KR054, KR057, KR076, KR078). All instructors in these studies were visibly foreign, so these comments are interpreted as a foreign peer, a distinction worth further exploration.

Students wrote most about the opportunity to improve their communication skills in this project. This demonstrates that despite low L2 proficiency, these students felt they were communicating successfully. KR089 expressed, "I found that Japanese students' English skills were not much different from ours so that they could converse with confidence even in poor English." KR110 had a similar thought: "It was nice to get a sense of accomplishment from being able to speak and understand English with foreigners who are not from my country."

Only five students reported the inability to participate in a call as the reason their SPCC did not increase, which is far below the number with technical difficulty. The asynchronous activities may have positively affected SPCC. Chadima (2016) found that a discussion forum positively influences communicative competence. Durante (2022) similarly found that students who were taught synchronously compared to those taught asynchronously had no statistically significant difference in the acquisition of oral communication competence. The potential role of these asynchronous tasks on SPCC and CA requires further study.

The SE scales in this study were specific to the tasks, while the SPCC and CA scales were more abstract, as they required reflection on perceptions of competence and anxiety. Most students likely never considered their CC pre-VE, and the surveys were an opportunity for self-reflection and critical thinking that led to a new perspective (Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Saleh, 2019). Furthermore, anxious L2 learners tend to underestimate, and relaxed students overestimate their fluency in the L2 when compared to independent, bilingual raters (MacIntyre et al., 1997). This could explain why SE saw much more apparent growth, with few students decreasing in SE, while SPCC and CA saw much more convergence towards the center.

The positive changes in SE and CC suggest that the CLM is a worthwhile experience for L2 learners with low language proficiency. Additional research should consider the long-term effect a CLM VE has on students' SE and CC. The statistical significance of SPCC and CA can be interpreted, at best, as a meaningful change in students' perceptions of themselves with possible long-term implications. However, with most students likely having limited experiences interacting with foreigners in English, this CLM VE most likely provided an opportunity for self-reflection, allowing students to understand their abilities and limitations in their L2.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of a common language model virtual exchange between university students in Japan and Korea on their self-efficacy, self-perceived communication competence, and communication anxiety related to using English as a foreign language. The VE was limited to three sessions with only one synchronous conversation. The results demonstrated that even a relatively brief virtual exchange can significantly increase students' SE and SPCC related to using English for communication. There were also decreases in students' CA, particularly among the Korean participants. The CLM is a promising approach to VE for instructors with low-proficiency language students and limited class time. While such a short VE is unlikely to change communication skills meaningfully, it can alter students' perceptions of their abilities. This change in perceptions may lead students to be more active L2 users.

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## APPENDIX A

**TABLE A1. Self-Efficacy Internal Reliability Test**

Cronbach's $\alpha$ Estimate	Total	Japan	Korea
Point estimate	0.907	0.883	0.896
95% CI lower bound	0.885	0.838	0.863
95% CI upper bound	0.925	0.917	0.923

## APPENDIX B

**TABLE A2. SPCC Internal Reliability Test**

Cronbach's $\alpha$ Estimate	Total	Japan	Korea
Point estimate	0.966	0.971	0.961
95% CI lower bound	0.958	0.959	0.949
95% CI upper bound	0.973	0.980	0.972

## APPENDIX C

**TABLE A3. CA Internal Reliability Test**

Cronbach's $\alpha$ Estimate	Total	Japan	Korea
Point estimate	0.949	0.944	0.953
95% CI lower bound	0.936	0.923	0.937
95% CI upper bound	0.959	0.960	0.965

## APPENDIX D

**Table A4. Self-Efficacy *t* Test**

Pre- / Post-VE	Total			Japan			Korea		
	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Statement 1	1763.500	-6.820	< .001	134.000	-6.133	< .001	831.000	-3.534	< .001
Statement 2	1605.000	-4.828	< .001	205.000	-4.408	< .001	632.500	-2.571	0.007
Statement 3	1183.000	-7.613	< .001	117.000	-6.100	< .001	508.000	-4.738	< .001
Statement 4	1442.500	-7.980	< .001	193.000	-5.988	< .001	567.000	-5.339	< .001
Statement 5	1759.500	-4.899	< .001	205.000	-4.628	< .001	706.000	-2.552	0.008
Statement 6	1704.500	-7.082	< .001	277.000	-5.005	< .001	611.000	-5.041	< .001
Statement 7	1935.000	-5.661	< .001	260.000	-4.611	< .001	785.000	-3.380	< .001
<b>Total</b>	2475.500	-8.805	< .001	151.000	-7.287	< .001	1243.50	-5.209	< .001

Note. Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

## APPENDIX E

**TABLE A5. SPCC *t* Test**

Pre- / Post- VE	Total			Japan			Korea		
	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	3182.500	-5.203	< .001	497.000	-3.498	< .001	1171.500	-3.885	< .001
Meeting	4481.500	-4.335	< .001	655.000	-3.023	0.002	1716.500	-3.163	0.002
Small Group	4481.000	-3.850	< .001	887.500	-2.238	0.025	1418.000	-3.071	0.002
Dyad	4022.500	-4.503	< .001	813.000	-2.955	0.003	1234.000	-3.400	< .001
Stranger	4398.000	-5.096	< .001	673.500	-3.722	< .001	1625.000	-3.583	< .001
Acquaintance	4398.000	-4.650	< .001	819.000	-2.922	0.003	1456.500	-3.555	< .001
Friend	4541.000	-4.974	< .001	869.500	-3.472	< .001	1461.500	-3.537	< .001
<b>Total</b>	4825.500	-5.179	< .001	842.500	-3.477	< .001	1655.000	-3.835	< .001

Note. Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

## APPENDIX F

**TABLE A6. CA *t* Test**

Pre- / Post- VE	Total			Japan			Korea		
	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Public	8076.500	3.629	< .001	1182.000	0.950	0.342	3064.500	3.845	< .001
Meeting	8725.000	3.384	< .001	1428.000	0.640	0.523	3018.000	3.661	< .001
Small Group	6530.500	0.721	0.470	801.500	-1.595	0.111	2738.500	2.334	0.019
Dyad	7448.000	1.871	0.061	1103.000	0.199	0.844	2829.000	2.249	0.024
Stranger	9512.500	3.658	< .001	1610.000	1.902	0.056	3309.500	3.133	0.002
Acquaintance	9221.500	2.118	0.034	1196.000	-1.032	0.301	3647.000	3.407	< .001
Friend	8606.500	1.351	0.175	1122.000	-1.077	0.280	3472.000	2.612	0.009
<b>Total</b>	10778.500	2.537	0.011	1575.000	-0.403	0.689	4006.500	3.473	< .001

Note. Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

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# Enhancing Teacher Performance and Awareness Through Written Reflection: A Case Study

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Reflective writing has been endorsed by experts in ELT and beyond (see Bolton & Delderfield, 2018; Farrell, 2015; Richards & Lockheart, 1996). This study seeks to catalog the benefits of sustained in-depth written reflections over the course of a semester in a South Korean foreign language high school. The author, drawing inspiration from Bolton and Delderfield, composed 22 written reflections with a minimum length of 500 words each between March 5 and June 25, 2025. Primary benefits of reflective writing included strengthening of professional knowledge bases, principled modifications of materials and teaching practice, and deeper awareness of both multiple dimensions of the author's teaching practice and areas of ignorance related to the author's instructional context. The article concludes with speculation about the prerequisite elements for optimizing the benefits of written reflection followed by a series of recommendations and cautions for readers interested in engaging in in-depth forms of reflective writing.

**Keywords:** teacher performance, teacher awareness, written reflection, case study, reflective practice

## INTRODUCTION

The benefits of reflective writing have long been acknowledged. Among the many benefits, Kim et al. argued that reflective writing can “help narrow the gap between theory and practice ... to discover knowledge embedded in practice” (Kim et al., 2010, as cited in Farrell, 2015). This study seeks to understand the potential benefits of sustained in-depth reflective writing performed over the course of a semester in a South Korean foreign language high school between March 5 and June 25, 2025.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Reflective practice has long been associated with John Dewey. The three core dispositions that Dewey cited for engaging in reflection are being open-minded, responsible, and whole-hearted (Dewey, 1933). Farrell (2015) elaborated on this:

Teachers must be open-minded with an active desire to listen to more than one side of an issue and then to admit they could be wrong and as a result must be willing to change a belief or practice. Teachers must be responsible by making careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads because all teachers' actions impact the students, the community, and the society at large. In addition, teachers must be wholehearted in their approach to reflective practice to continually review their beliefs and actions, and to seek every opportunity to continue to learn and develop themselves as human beings and teachers. (pp. 12–13)

Bolton et al. (2018) provided a thorough rationale for engaging in reflective writing and a multitude of strategies. According to Bolton et al., benefits include recognizing unperceived choices, identifying sources of stress, recognizing what can be changed, learning to work with what cannot be changed, enhancing empathy, rehearsing future behavior, enhancing creativity, making and evaluating decisions, and considering how to apply professional theory (pp. 28, 225). That study mentioned many strategies for engaging in reflective writing. In the interests of concision, I will focus on those that appeared in the data collected for this study. Table 1 summarizes Bolton et al.'s rationale for using these reflective writing strategies.

**TABLE 1. Reflective Writing Strategies Addressed by Bolton et al. (2018) and Used in This Study**

Strategy	Rationale
Metaphor	Especially original metaphors. Bolton et al. cites anecdotes of reflective writers undergoing paradigm shifts when they reconceive of managerial functions as conducting a symphony rather than fighting a war. Original metaphors, as opposed to cliches, may be transformed into a “memorable mantra” that can nurture further motivation and growth. Metaphor also serves as a vehicle to make the abstract concrete (p. 161–162).
Critical Incident	Most associated with Stephen Brookfield. Bolton et al. quotes Brookfield's definition of this concept: “vividly remembered events” (p. 43). Bolton et al. stresses that less intensely remembered events are also potent fodder for reflective writing.
Perspective Taking	Bolton et al. permits fictional narratives when taking another's perspective. Bolton et al. views this strategy as a vehicle to perceive “fresh possibilities,” garner insight, and purge emotion (pp. 131–134).
Unsent Letter	This strategy, according to Bolton et al., builds insight, empathy, and release of emotion (p. 216).
Poetry	“Can enable exploration and expression of ‘things we don't actually want to say’ but ‘desperately need to share’ ... can succinctly express vital experiences” (p. 150).
Ask WHY	The rationale isn't necessarily directly elaborated by Bolton et al., but it is a strategy that is foregrounded in their work. For instance, they claim, “[Ask WHY] of everything and anything: This is the critical reflexive question form” (p. 238).
Photography	Bolton et al. only mentions this strategy in passing (p. 99). Yet, they endorse it. Lemon (2007) notes photographs can “preserve the appearance of an event or a person or as a metaphor of an experience” (p. 179). Coupled with narrative, photography “can make us understand” an experience more deeply (p. 179).

Farrell (2022), likewise, endorses reflective writing. He stated,

Writing as a tool for professional development has its own built-in reflective mechanism, you must stop, however briefly, to consider what you are thinking about, and this helps organize all the passing thoughts that flow at high speeds. Then after writing..., you can actually “see” your thoughts, and this gives us another chance to consider if they remain relevant for the issue you are reflecting on. (p. 19)

Farrell (2022) illustrated the utility of reflective writing with the case of a South Korean teacher, Minjung (pseudonym), who managed to clarify her values through reflective writing: “A good lesson for me is when students are talking together; today was better because I changed the activities, and the students began to talk more in class” (p. 113).

Hatton and Smith (cited in Farrell, 2022, p. 20) listed four levels of writing: descriptive writing, descriptive reflective, dialogic reflection, and critical reflection. They are summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Hatton and Smith’s Four Levels of Writing**

Level	Summary
Descriptive Writing	This is not reflective. It is a report with no justification provided.
Descriptive Reflection	Provides justification. Primarily focused on personal viewpoints.
Dialogic Reflection	More detached. Explores multiple reasons for an incident occurring.
Critical Reflection	Takes account of multiple perspectives. Exhibits awareness of factors beyond the classroom (such as social, historical, and political influences) and the role they have on the functioning of a class.

Bolton et al. (2018) was emphatic about what reflective writing is not. It is not about what they termed “confession.” They stated, “Confession can be a conforming mechanism, despite sounding liberating, freeing from a burden of doubt, guilt, and anxiety. Confession has a seductive quality because it passes responsibility to others” (p. 40). Likewise, Bolton et al. insisted that reflective writing is not formulaic and that guided models can “constrain.” They assert that only individuals can empower themselves (p. 90). They also noted that reflective writing is not concerned with generating a final product (p. 172).

In contrast, Bolton et al. noted that reflective writing as a strategy seeks to continually ask why, requires authors to have authority over their compositions, has a future orientation, prioritizes self-illumination, exploration (p. 172), and is open to any dimension of professional experience; they state, “In reflective practice no detail is too trivial or insignificant to write, think, and talk about” (p. 114).

## PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

I currently work in a foreign language high school in Seoul, South Korea. Since 2015, I have been the “head teacher of the native English teachers” at this institution. This role gives me substantial autonomy in deciding many elements of the curriculum.

I hold an MEd in TESOL and have been extensively involved in professional communities, primarily through Korea TESOL, since 2011. Reflective practice has been a key professional interest ever since undertaking and completing my MEd (see Miller, 2016a, 2016b, 2025). A research article published in 2025 detailed my core teaching values, which include clarity, minimizing non-essential teacher talk, providing incentives to listen to teacher talk and encouraging behavior, and cognitive and emotional forms of engagement (Miller, 2025, p. 46). Self-observation has been a weekly fixture of my professional development routines since June of 2024. I mention all this not for purposes of vanity but to disclose my dispositions and professional routines as they undoubtedly color the nature of the reflective writings that form the basis of this research article. As I have 10 different groups of learners in a semester, I have to teach the exact same lesson 10 times. This provides me with a great incentive to engage in reflective practice. It offers a forum to try out personally innovative strategies in a nearly identical context as well as refine subsequent performances of identical lessons.

This writing project stemmed from my professional reading, especially Gillie Bolton and Russell Delderfield's *Reflective Writing for Professional Development* (2018). Adapting their guidelines for my personal context, I sought to engage in sustained in-depth reflective writing over the course of a semester. This article is an attempt to discern what value that enterprise had.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1. In what ways did professional knowledge get activated through sustained, in-depth reflective writing?
- RQ2. In what ways was this process of reflective writing facilitative of positive behavior change as it pertains to my teaching?
- RQ3. What awareness was partially generated by engaging in sustained in-depth reflective writing?

## METHOD

Following Bolton et al.'s (2018) suggestion to eschew formulaic processes for reflective writing, I set up the following personal guidelines:

1. I would write minimally once a week during the semester (weeks with exams were excluded).
2. Each written reflection needed to be 500 words minimum. There was no maximum word limit. I chose this number to keep the activity sustainable and to allow for a somewhat in-depth treatment of the incident selected.

3. The events addressed in the article had to stem from something that occurred during designated instructional time. Insights related to professional literature or experiences and interactions outside of the classroom were not part of the data collection or analysis. Though, at the start of this project at least, there were no additional constraints for what could be considered. This was inspired by the aforementioned statement by Bolton et al. that in reflective practice “no detail is too trivial...”

As this project developed and evolved, I started to add additional features to many of my reflective entries. These included:

1. Giving a title to each written reflection. I chose to do this following Bolton et al.’s aforementioned guidelines to have authority in one’s writing.
2. Giving an epigram to each written reflection. This followed the same logic as mentioned in the immediately preceding item.
3. Making use of recalling of sensory detail. Most written reflections featured an attempt to recall features of the scene, be it surroundings, or features of the student(s) that were the focus of the written reflection. Bolton et al. noted that recalling sensory details through reflective writing may unearth memories that are not readily available (p. 180) and that it may enable “cognitive, affective and somatic ways of knowing” (p. 161).

## **Data Collection**

The critical incidents collected over an approximately three-and-a-half-month period are detailed in the Appendix. The date, a title, a general description, and the strategies used are listed for 22 entries.

## **Coding Procedures**

I read the written reflections multiple times looking for emergent themes (Perry, 2011) related to both the research questions and in general. Following this, I engaged in content analysis and made many tally counts (Farrell, 2015) related to questions that emerged after multiple readings. Aspects of the written reflection content that were tallied included listing of solutions for future performance, direct and indirect knowledge activation, instances of acknowledging ignorance, frequency of the formation of personal constructs, references to personal biography, references to affective concerns, references to technical concerns, instances of critical reflection, and comments celebrating subjectively perceived positive occurrences during teaching episodes. Due to space constraints, many of the coded items are not addressed in this article. Nevertheless, the coding procedures helped provide a richer understanding, which has informed the analysis and interpretation present in this article.

## RESULTS

RQ1. In what ways did professional knowledge get activated through sustained, in-depth reflective writing?

It is difficult to provide any level of precision to this question. Any form of reflection is likely to activate a wide range of memories, be it declarative or episodic. However, through content analysis of the written reflections, it was possible to discern that professional knowledge was activated via the act of reflective writing. In the reflections under review in this study, I noted 35 instances of direct reference to key concepts or jargon that I judge as relevant to both the subject of ELT and more broadly of education, as well as 15 indirect references. For instance, concepts such as exploratory practice (Gebhard, 2005), provisional writing (Silver et al., 2013), self-determination theory (Mercer & Dornyei, 2020), and topic-related vocabulary (Nation, 2001) appear in my written reflections.

I noted a “recency effect” to the professional literature referenced in the written reflections. Works that I have read in 2025, such as Silver et al.’s *The Core Six: Essential Strategies for Achieving Excellence with the Common Core*, Mercer and Dornyei’s *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms* and John Hattie’s *Visible Thinking* were present. This may indicate that reflective writing strengthens a teacher’s personal understanding of many concepts relevant to performing one’s professional duties. Knowledge was not only mechanically reproduced or alluded to. The written reflections also show a more robust and creative use of the concepts. The author occasionally elaborated on core concepts and jargons. For example, with written utterances such as an “oral contrastive gloss,” “delayed oral gloss” or the merging of concepts associated with relatively disparate concerns such as blending exploratory practice (Gebhard, 2005) and Hadfield’s notion of [blank] self (i.e., procrastinator self, default self, future self, etc.; Hadfield, 2019). In the 3-21(b) entry, I refer to an “exploratory teacher self.”

However, I did enter this reflective writing project with a clear bias. I believe in the value of deep processing (see Craik & Lockheart, 1972). Thus, I am always seeking out opportunities to engage in deeper processing of the professional literature I read. That bias likely increased the probability that the terminology used in the literature I consumed would more often appear in my written reflections. Perhaps a reflective practitioner without such an explicit value or aim would not connect their experience to professional concepts in an equally intense manner.

RQ2. In what ways was this process of reflective writing facilitative of positive behavior change as it pertains to my teaching?

As I teach the same lesson content 10 times, I am afforded the opportunity to make minor tweaks to my instruction. Reflective writing allows for explicit listing of changes for subsequent performances of the same lesson. Unfortunately, I did not document every change that resulted from (or at least was partially connected to)

engaging in sustained in-depth reflective writing. That undertaking would be challenging methodologically and entail a significant amount of time. Nevertheless, through reviewing materials and recordings of teaching performance, I was able to identify important changes – that I subjectively deemed as improvements – in my instructional delivery. Three example changes are detailed below.

### **Better Use of Guided Questions During a Draft Writing and Revision Task**

Related to “Keon Hee’s Blank Page (#14, no date),” I enriched the subsequent lesson *following* the lesson devoted to writing the draft of a speech (related to giving someone a celebratory toast). This allowed many students to produce a clearer, more focused draft. For example, many students (an estimated 25%) misinterpreted the third section of the speech titled “Crowning Achievement.” That group of students often simply listed a large number of accomplishments. However, relevant commentary about the significance of the accomplishment(s) was lacking. Guided questions helped to ameliorate that (see Figure 1). Reflective writing contributed to enrichment of materials to guide the written output of learners. Worth mentioning, though beyond the scope of this research, is that the instructional strategy just mentioned was replicated in modified form in the second semester. This may indicate that reflective writing contributed to not only the learning but also the transfer of skills and instructional strategies to different contexts. At least in this instance, the insights garnered in part by reflective writing proved to be relatively enduring.

**FIGURE 1. Reflective Writing Helped Stimulate the Creation of Additional Materials to Guide Learners in Composing a Speech**

**ADVICE FOR MAKING A MORE INTERESTING SCRIPT**

**Capture Interest**

- Use questions in the form of anaphora.

**Example:** Who can tell me who won the 2018 MVP? Who can tell me who won the 2020 world cup? And who can tell me...?

**The Ascent**

- Discuss difficulties or failures the person had.
- Discuss how they prepared or trained.
- Discuss criticism they received.
- Discuss where they began their career.

**Crowning Accomplishment**

- Include a quote from the person. How did they feel when they achieved their “crowning accomplishment?”

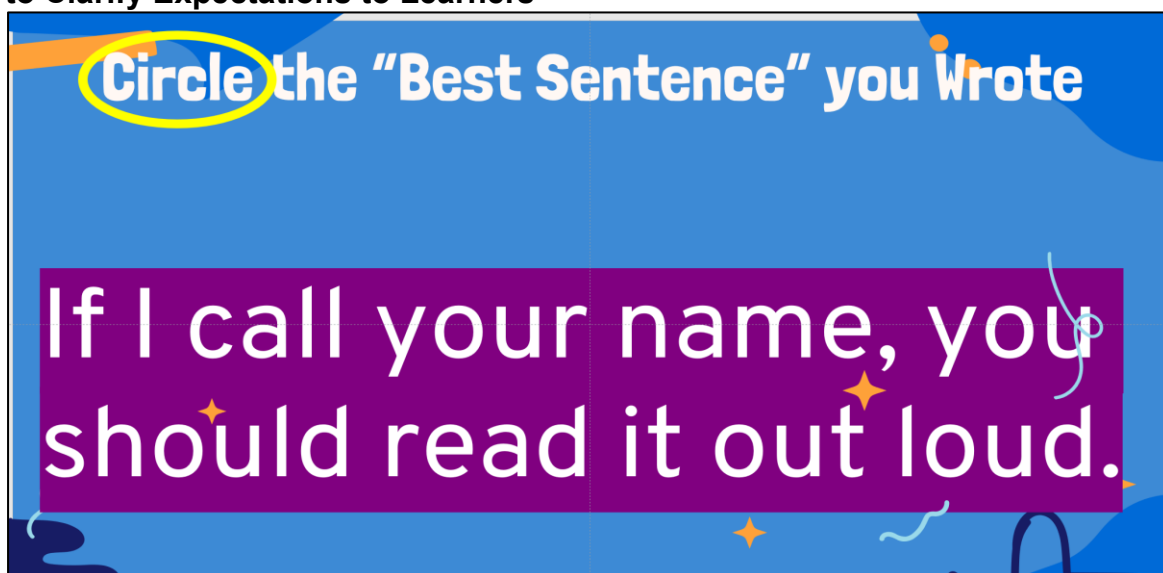
**Send Off**

- Have a creative technique.
- Have a quote from the person receiving the toast.

## Providing Learners with Additional Time and Guidance to Prepare for a Whole Class Response

In the reflective entry titled “Why? Ask Why!” I had a challenge with a student that was not willing to read a sentence that he was instructed to write in a previous task. Upon reflection and after reviewing data I had collected on the student, I noted that this student was the weakest in my class based on a pre-semester diagnostic test and that he had not completed that initial sentence-writing task. I also recognized that I had only provided oral instructions to students. Furthermore, that student was “cold-called” by randomly selecting his name. In later performances of this lesson, I provided visual, written cues to learners to select one sentence that they had written previously and in written instructions displayed on a PowerPoint slide. Learners were informed that they were expected to read that sentence (see Figure 2). Similar breakdowns that prompted that written reflection were not repeated in subsequent performances of that particular lesson.

**FIGURE 2. Reflective Writing Influenced Decisions to Provide More Written Input to Clarify Expectations to Learners**



## Demanding “Uptake” and Not Merely Delivering Feedback

In the written reflection titled “Intervention Is Not Enough,” I wrote about a student who during a small group skit rehearsal failed to have adequate emotion for the role she was practicing. To put it bluntly, the lines were delivered by the student in what I deemed to be a spiritless manner. In past years, I may have simply delivered feedback about the inadequacy I felt a learner had displayed. On this occasion, I insisted that the learner reperform her rehearsal and deliver the lines with appropriate emotion as soon as I noticed what I considered subpar learner performance. I did not leave this group of students until the learner demonstrated a delivery more aligned with expectations (that had been communicated both by my immediate feedback and previous whole class instruction). This type of intervention could be considered

demanding that students perform a type of “behavioral uptake.” Reflective writing coupled with a relevant presentation that I attended about two months prior to this critical incident (see Reeser, 2025) helped facilitate the incorporation of this instructional move into my teaching repertoire.

RQ3. What awareness was generated in part through in-depth sustained reflective writing?

Five categories were noted related to how this form of reflective writing expanded the author’s awareness: affective considerations, awareness of instructional gaps and flaws, a deeper appreciation for the elements that made an activity successful (at least momentarily and partially), recognition of ignorance, and awareness that the act of in-depth writing promotes more meaningful insights.

### **Affective Considerations**

I became more aware of certain tendencies in how I related to students. I noted that I tended to be tendentious. In the written reflection dated 4-10-25, after calling on a student who I knew gave an incorrect answer, I referred to her as “the very confident Park Yeon Hee (pseudonym)” in reference to a comment she had made about herself earlier in that lesson about her level of confidence in giving the correct answer to a question. Shortly afterwards, it was revealed that her answer was actually incorrect. I suspect that my impulse to make the “very confident” utterance came from a desire to elicit an emotional reaction from students. That is understandable. A high school teacher has to call on a wide range of strategies to elicit situated motivation (see Clark & Lyons, 2004) from students. Short-term strategies, such as using a call back (Hoovler, p. 27) to a previous utterance, is one technique. In this instance, I may have caused a slight bit of discomfort to the student. It was a demonstration of an inappropriate use of a strategy to elicit emotion from students. Perhaps my preference for getting an emotional reaction, any kind of emotional reaction, from students clouded my judgement at that moment.

Reflecting on my inability to recall a student’s name (“Say My Name,” 3-31-25) while modeling expectations for an activity allowed me to consider how it may make a student feel if the teacher cannot recall their name. My reflections led me to conclude that by not remembering a student’s name, especially when others are accurately produced by a teacher, an instructor is concretely signaling to a student that they are more marginal than other “well-remembered” peers. Thus, after that incident, I began to take even greater care to learning the names of students as soon as possible. As an aside, it is worth noting that learning the names of students and using them consistently has been endorsed by experts in ELT (see Mercer et al., 2020, p. 66).

### **Awareness of Instructional Gaps and Flaws**

As the semester progressed, my reflective writing took on more of a focus on breakdowns in my instructions. Following Bolton et al.’s (2018) guideline – “at every

opportunity ask: WHY?” (p. 205) – when I chose a topic for a reflective writing entry related to a perceived instructional flaw, I typically asked why did this occur? For example, in the 4-21-25 “seating mishap” reflection, I speculated that three factors had led to students being off-task (seating arrangement, lax body language on my part while monitoring, and multiple cues on the PowerPoint, which served to split attention). In the 6-11-25 written reflection titled “The Tumbleweed,” I noted four factors that may have contributed to the initial difficulty in collaboration among a group of three students. Factors I could have potentially modified included pre-selecting group members (though I noted in this reflective entry that this choice would have entailed additional tradeoffs) and providing more details while modeling expectations. A recurring theme through multiple entries was the need to make the implicit explicit in my instruction and communication of expectations. In the aggregate, the word *explicit* occurred sixteen times over ten entries and *implicit* was present in five entries, appearing a total of nine times. This aligns well with what Bolton et al. repeatedly emphasize, namely, making the implicit – especially values – explicit (p. 124). In sum, in-depth reflective writing helped to cultivate more of a “diagnostic mindset” in which I would be more inclined to consider why an activity was or was not working as intended.

The use of in-depth reflective writing enhanced the memorability of occurrences in the classroom and promoted more thorough and rigorous efforts to prevent similar missteps during class time. For instance, on a feedback checklist I gave to students, I included a technical term that was not related to the lesson’s content. That became the focus of a 5-8-25 entry. Reflecting on the inclusion of a technical term that students had not been exposed to previously during instructional time in my class on a feedback sheet prompted a student question and made me realize that I added a small, but distracting, amount of cognitive load. Such reflection motivated me to engage in more thorough proofreading to prevent similar mishaps in the future. For a time, I put a picture of the document on my work computer to remind me of the error. The response one student gave during a written mid-semester survey in which they stated that elements of my class (due to repetition of some tasks) were “kind of boring,” prompted a written reflection on 4-25-25. Subsequently, I felt motivated to examine the level of task recycling that went on in my class. I examined several months of previous lesson plans and materials to determine if it would be possible to space out certain tasks I often had chosen to repeat to provide less feelings of redundancy in my students. Perhaps the aforementioned experiences *sans* reflective writing would have prompted me to act in similar ways. It seems plausible though that without sustained attention on these self-selected critical incidents, that I may have never attended to them that much in the first place. As Mccrea stated, attention is “the ultimate currency” of education (cited in Mercer et al., p. 100). Without attention, it is impossible to develop intellectually. Reflective writing is a concrete strategy to maintain attention on a particular concern. That attention, in turn, makes possible actions that can enhance and develop the professional repertoire of an educator.

## **Recognition of Ignorance**

On a written reflection dated 3-5-25, I acknowledged to myself that I was unaware of the content that students noticed when looking at images I had compiled of learners posing for a class photo. Though I had seen learners laughing while looking in the vicinity of the images, given my limited listening proficiency in Korean, I could not be certain if the comments were teasing or not, nor did I have much awareness of how learners received such laughter. Frequently, I was also unable to accurately reconstruct details of critical incidents. For instance, on multiple occasions, I could not recall who a student (who was the subject of my written reflection) was partnered with when the critical incident occurred. I acknowledged to myself on several occasions that my subjective impressions were just that – subjective impressions. As an example, in the written reflection dated 3-21-25, I noted that I believed I had learners emotionally engaged. However, my records indicate that they are “furiously scribbling notes.” That is not indicative of emotional engagement. It is not even confirmation of behavioral engagement, since I did not have evidence of what the learners are taking notes on. On the positive side, this recognition of ignorance did at times prompt me to review data I had collected on students to check my impressions. For instance, after composing “Keon Hee’s Blank Page (entry #14, no date)” I checked all of the learners’ compositions and noted that about 25 percent of the students performed in a manner that I would consider significantly below expectations. This prompted revision of materials for later lessons in that unit.

## **Deeper Appreciation for the Elements That Made an Activity Successful**

On the 4-14-25 entry titled “Break It Down,” I noted a student, who I assessed as lower-proficiency at the start of the semester, had produced a competent form of a rhetorical technique – anaphora. I attributed this student’s uptake of my instruction as partially related to more nuanced detail in my instruction, including guidance on the sequencing of items when composing sentences utilizing anaphora. Again, I reflected on the value of making instruction as explicit as possible (see Figure 3).

In the undated entry titled “I Think That Will Be Negative...,” I documented how a learner was able to infer elements of the meaning of a vocabulary term based on prior information shared by me in the lesson. In this example, the learner was able to incorporate prior instruction delivered by me to draw a reasonable conclusion for an inductive reasoning task. This made me feel that my materials were reasonably clear and that learners were able to actively engage with the materials and draw valid conclusions without me needing to (always) explicitly deliver information about the meaning of the target vocabulary items to learners.

## **The Act of In-Depth Writing Promotes More Meaningful Insights**

On two occasions, I noted in my written reflections that immediately prior to noticing an incident that would become the fodder for a subsequent reflective entry that I was indeed conscious that I “needed” to find a critical incident to write about –

so as to meet my self-imposed obligation. For instance, on the 6-19-25 written reflection “Intervention Is Not Enough,” I wrote the following:

I don't think I can neglect the role of journaling to help generate this level of awareness. Right before I had that moment of “intervene with Jee-eun [pseudonym]” and have her demonstrate a more emotional delivery, I was literally thinking about what would I write for my CI [critical incident] this week.

Did the act of deliberately attempting to find an incident to write about make my experiences more meaningful (through writing), and thus produce more meaningful experiences? It is a fair conjecture to speculate that the act of writing coupled with the personal expectation and responsibility to write promotes a greater sensitivity to one's experience. The act of writing, which in this case was a self-imposed obligation, opens up the possibilities for, and may even stimulate personally, novel discoveries.

### FIGURE 3. Reflective Writing Documented Instructional Strategies That I Judged as More Effective. It Facilitated a Deeper Level of Analysis and Appreciation for Why These Strategies Were Effective

The image shows a screenshot of a digital document. At the top, it says "YOUR FINISHED CREATIVE TECHNIQUE IS: (Circle) Anaphora / Word Play". Below this, it asks "Write your creative technique here:" and shows three lines of handwritten text: "He says is the best on Korean fencing team.", "says is the best player on Asian fencing league", and "And. says is the best player in the world". Below the handwriting, there is a pink box with the text "Messi is the best on his team. Messi is the best in his league...AND... Messi is the best in the world!". To the right of this box is a green box with the text "The sentence with the greatest IMPACT should be the last sentence with anaphora." Below these boxes, there is a section titled "BRAINSTORMING SPACE: List at least 5 words or ideas about your topic here." with a list of five lines. The first line is filled with the text "First Brainstorm... Don't write the creative technique yet."

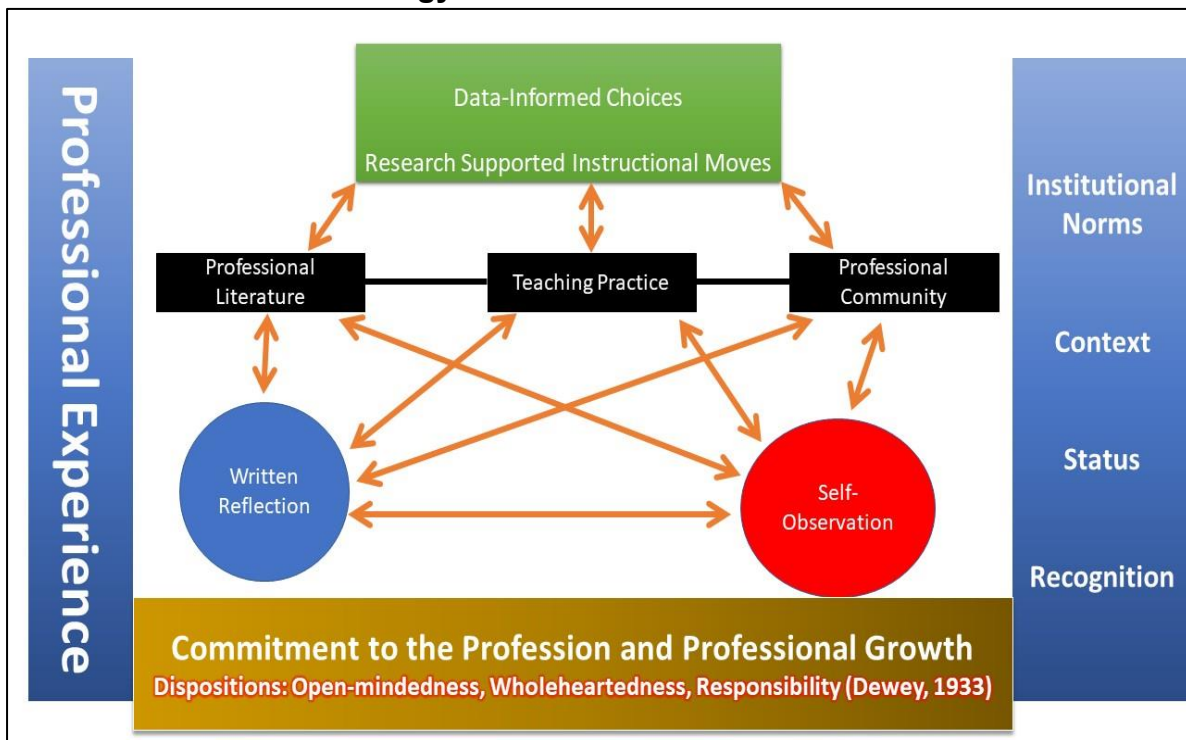
## DISCUSSION

Sustained in-depth reflective writing had a positive impact on my teaching. It reinforced my professional knowledge base and increased awareness of multiple tendencies while teaching. Though it is tempting to make the argument that reflective writing is responsible for the shifts that occurred in my teaching performance and lesson preparation during the period under consideration in this study, that statement disregards much of my personal and professional context. First, I have engaged in near weekly sessions of self-observation of my teaching performance since June of 2024. This is a different form of reflection, and it undoubtedly informed the reflective writing I engaged in during the time period reviewed here. Additionally, I have been engaged with professional communities (most notably Korea TESOL) since 2011.

Also, I have a fair amount of autonomy, status, and trust with my supervisors at my current place of employment. Perhaps reflective writing is less relevant if any of the aforementioned elements are absent.

Nevertheless, I experienced the process of engaging in reflective writing to be invigorating and an accelerant of positive change in my professional life. In an attempt to explain why reflective writing “works” for me, I put forth the following model. It situates reflective writing as a minor component in a larger professional ecology that is conducive to at least a subjective perception of professional growth. It is my belief that absent a nurturing ecology, reflective writing is of limited relevance. I do wish to stress that this model is based on my personal experience. I make no claims that such forms of professional activity will be conducive to professional growth in other contexts (see Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4. A Hypothetical Model of the Factors Enabling Reflective Writing to Become an Effective Strategy for Professional Growth**

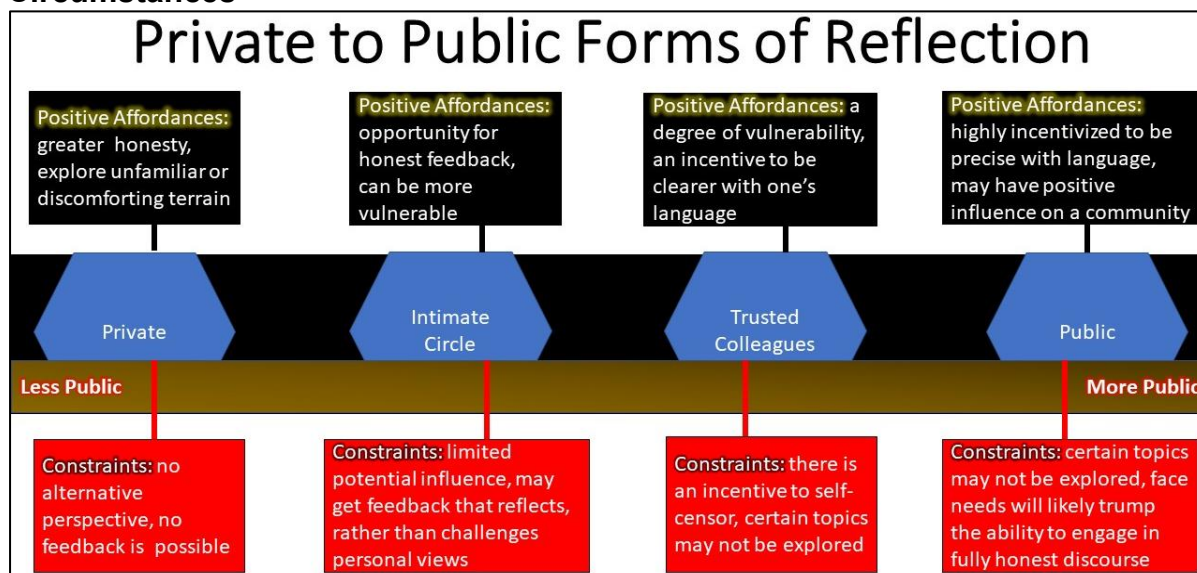


Though this project was heavily influenced by the work of Bolton et al., I did not incorporate one major suggestion that appeared in their work. This form of reflection was not done in a community setting. Many have suggested that reflection in community settings is highly beneficial (see Bolton et al., 2018, and Kuroda, 2024). Bolton et al., while acknowledging the value of private reflection, continually nudge the reader to share at least parts of their documented reflections (for example, see p. 223). However, I would note that there are affordances available for reflection undertaken in a variety of circumstances, including exclusively private ones.

One could conceive of reflection as occurring on a continuum from public to private (see Figure 5). Private is something that is not shared with anyone. This allows for greater self-honesty and the exploration of topics which might be discomforting,

even taboo in certain communities. Reflection could take place within an intimate circle. This might allow for more open sharing than other arrangements. Reflection among trusted colleagues might allow for a sense of vulnerability, but since literally one's livelihood is connected to this community, the members of such a reflective community will likely be relatively guarded. Finally, reflection can be done in a public setting, perhaps in a workshop or even expressed through a journal article. In this latter context, one would expect the reflecting practitioner to have the lowest degree of authenticity along the continuum I have sketched out and to engage in the highest degree of self-censorship. When considering that all members of the community in a public forum are similarly compelled to perform in such a guarded manner, one must wonder to what degree is genuine honesty degraded in more formal and public settings for reflection? I mention this not to deny the value of more public forms of communal reflection, but rather to emphasize that certain affordances and constraints are present in all types of reflection.

**FIGURE 5. Affordances and Constraints of Reflection Undertaken in Different Circumstances**



In the written reflections under consideration in this article, I have explored topics that I would not be willing to discuss among trusted colleagues. For instance, without going into the details, my written reflection dated 3-21-25, entitled “The Water Bottle Leads to Cognitive Lacunae,” included a few meditations on the role material objects play in communicating status and how they mediate human communication in the classroom and beyond. I referenced elements of evolutionary psychology, a field associated with the relatively controversial scholars Geoffrey Miller and David Buss. I currently feel the reflection and the content in that written reflection were valid to being an effective teacher. I wrote on that critical incident to attempt to understand the factors that led to a student being briefly off-task. Nevertheless, I would partially self-censor myself in a professional setting if similar topics were broached. I share this illustration merely to assert that private reflection is something that has merit and that the nature

of the reflection will vary depending on the context in which the reflection is undertaken.

## **Recommendations**

At the start of this project, I was not able to fully conceive the direction it would take and many modifications were made during the process of composing written reflections at a rate of more than once per week over the course of a semester. For readers interested in engaging in such a project, I would recommend the following:

### **Take Pictures**

The value of photography for reflective practice has been documented, explored, and recommended by multiple educators (see Lemon, 2007, and Benévolo França, 2017) For myself, taking pictures added the ability to compare and contrast aspects of seating arrangements before and after I composed a written reflection on the topic. Additionally, I documented a variety of items via photography throughout the period under consideration: samples of student work (both that which disappointed me and that which impressed me), teaching materials I considered flawed or inadequate in some way, revised materials for future teaching performances of similar lessons, and moments of perceived professional competence in the classroom. The incorporation of photos into my written reflections increased my sense of ownership and connection to the project of consistently engaging in in-depth sustained reflective writing.

### **Be Precise About Data Collection**

I had dates missing. I did not initially give titles to my reflective entries. I didn't engage in any form of categorization of the nature of the entries until well after the period under consideration in this study. Upon reflection, I see that I could have classified the entries as primarily oriented in an affective, critical (i.e., as in taking account of larger factors beyond the classroom; see Farrell, 2015), technical, celebratory, or even a self-critical direction. However, I wish to stress that these shifts and expanding levels of awareness emerged somewhat organically through the process of consistently engaging in reflective writing.

### **Balance the Nature of the Reflections**

Relatively early in this project, I noted that my first three written reflections were focused primarily on affective concerns. Thus, I deliberately began to address more technical concerns, such as an undated reflection (#10, "To Gloss or Not to Gloss – That Is the Question") on my decision to not gloss a low-frequency vocabulary item. Other areas where better balance might have been achieved are between those entries focused on celebratory aspects of my teaching performance versus more self-critical entries. According to my content analysis, I classified 14 items as containing self-critical features and six as having predominantly celebratory aspects. This was an unprincipled tendency. Several experts in the field of reflective practice warn against

self-laceration (Farrell, 2018) or mistaking reflective writing for “confession” (Bolton et al., 2018).

Certain entries included confession and self-laceration. For instance, my 4-14-25 written reflection included the following: “the result of a teacher’s neglect of responsibility.” This was in reference to the omission of guided questions to assist students in composing their first draft of a speech. Later in the same entry I wrote: “I recognize that I have failed this student.” This self-critical tendency was present in later entries, such as 6-13-25, in which I described an incident that involved one group (out of 5 groups total in that class) that had challenges getting started on a project. I labeled that incident as a “pedagogical disaster.” This type of self-lacerating confession is a distraction from the primary purpose, in my view, of reflective writing: to improve future performance.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, sustained in-depth reflective writing can motivate professional growth, strengthen a teacher’s understanding of key concepts in their chosen field, and increase an instructor’s awareness of many dimensions of their professional life. However, it is unlikely that the act of writing is the sole factor in generating such positive outcomes. Rather, reflective writing is a professional development strategy that is more likely to produce beneficial outcomes if several conditions are present. These include appropriate dispositions, a supportive context and community, as well as a substantial amount of relevant knowledge coupled with a significant amount of experience. Absent these elements, the benefits of sustained in-depth reflective writing are unlikely to be fully realized.

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX

**TABLE A1. Data Collected for This Study (March 5 – June 25, 2025)**

Order	Date	Title	Description	Strategies Used
1	3-5-25	No title	On the first day of class, I took a picture of the class. I noticed that several students did not smile in the image.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsent letter</li> <li>• Perspective taking</li> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>• Dialogic reflection</li> </ul>
2	3-14-25	No title	The perceived relevance of adding more emotion and exaggeration to the word “disgusting” while delivering a discussion prompt to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poem</li> <li>• Listing of implications</li> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>
3	3-18-25	No title	Use of playful teasing to generate more curiosity from learners before I revealed an answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal construct formation</li> <li>• Discussion of future considerations</li> </ul>
4	3-19-25	Why? Ask Why!	What factors led to a student not following directions from the teacher when prompted near the end of class?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poem</li> <li>• Ask WHY</li> </ul>
5	3-21-25	The Water Bottle Leads to Cognitive Lacunae	A student is off-task during a pair discussion task. Part of her off-task behavior includes asking for a drink of water. Why did this off-task episode occur?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing.</li> <li>• Listing of implications</li> <li>• Ask WHY</li> </ul>
6	3-21-25(b)	Eye Contact and Comfort for the Other	A reflection on experimenting with different levels of eye contact with different classes and the reaction that I perceived learners to have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>
7	3-25-25	Eager Eye	A student unprompted by the teacher uses visual clues to discern the answer to a question asked by the teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photography</li> <li>• Perspective taking</li> <li>• Poem</li> <li>• Descriptive writing</li> </ul>
8	3-28-25	The Instructional Blob	Working from a lesson plan designed by another teacher, there were a few communication breakdowns with learners. What features of the materials and my communication contributed to those breakdowns?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photography</li> <li>• Rehearsing future behavior</li> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>• Dialogic reflection</li> <li>• Ask WHY</li> </ul>
9	3-31-25	Say My Name!	I forget one student’s name during an instructional sequence. She has an emotional response to my inability to remember.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>• Perspective taking</li> </ul>
10	No Date	To Gloss or Not to Gloss – That Is the Question	Related to a speech writing assignment, the section titles included low-frequency vocabulary items (such as “the ascent”). Without a translation, student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poem</li> <li>• Perspective taking (an expert)</li> <li>• Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>

confusion results.

11	4-8-25	Learned Helplessness	Lower-proficiency learners do not immediately grasp the expectations of a task they need to perform. I explore what may have led to this communication breakdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Rehearsing future behavior</li> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
12	4-10-25	"I'm 1000% Confident"	A student claims all of her answers for a review activity completed with a partner are correct, stating she is "1000% confident" about the accuracy of her answers. Later it is revealed that not every answer was correct. I choose to lightly tease the student about it near the end of the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Poetry</li> <li>● Perspective taking</li> <li>● Dialogic reflection</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
13	4-14-25	"Break It Down"	I provide a more nuanced level of teaching related to the rhetorical technique anaphora compared to years prior. A student who scored low on a beginning-of-the-year diagnostic test does a competent job producing an example of that technique.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Photography</li> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>
14	No Date	Keon Hee's [pseudonym] Blank Page	A student produces a subpar first draft of a speech. I recognize that the task needed additional scaffolding and cues to supplement the worked examples and think-aloud instructional strategies provided to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Photography</li> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Implications for the future</li> <li>● Rehearsing future behavior</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
15	4-21-25	Seating Mishap	I allow students to revise their individual speech scripts while they are seated in pairs sitting face-to-face. I perceive that many students were not fully on task during the time allocated for revision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rehearsing future behavior</li> <li>● Poetry</li> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Dialogic reflective writing</li> <li>● Perspective taking</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
16	4-25-25	"...So Felt Kind of Boring"	Ruminations about what one comment from a student survey says about my teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poetry</li> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>

17	5-8-25	What Is Acronym?	Due to a last-minute change in the curriculum plan that was beyond my control, I left a rhetorical strategy (acronym) that was studied in a previous unit on a sheet given to students in the semester in which this article is focused. However, the acronym was not studied during the semester in which data for this article was collected. Confusion and questions result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Photography</li> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Metaphor</li> <li>● Critical reflection</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
18	5-15-25	Take a Knee	After observing (through videoing of teacher performance) myself standing while interacting with students who were sitting, I change strategies and come down to students' level physically by taking a knee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Photography</li> </ul>
19	No Date	"I Think That Will Be Negative..."	A student uses information shared previously in the class to infer a correct answer. As a teacher, I am pleased to see the student using inference skills and feel reassured that a more inductive approach has merit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> </ul>
20	6-11-25	The Tumbleweed	Three students grouped together don't collaborate well initially. Thus, they have significant delays in initiating their project compared to their peers. How did my grouping and modeling strategies contribute to this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
21	6-19-25	Intervention Is Not Enough	A student is rehearsing a skit performance. I feel the student needs to display more emotion (as specified during prior instruction and the grading criteria). Instead of merely providing feedback, I insist that the student deliver a few lines with "emotion."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Metaphor</li> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>
22	6-25-25	Gone in .6 Seconds	Students in a speaking task requiring them to respond to a prompt while standing at a particular learner station (Gilmore & Goldberg, p. 17), go off task within 20 seconds. What features of the physical environment and the task design contributed to this occurrence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Descriptive reflective writing</li> <li>● Future implications</li> <li>● Ask WHY</li> </ul>

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# Bangladeshi Secondary Schools Teachers' Perception of Fostering Creativity in EFL Classrooms

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Fostering creativity in the English language classroom has hardly received the necessary attention in the context of Bangladesh, and more specifically, in secondary school-level English language instruction. The purpose of this study is to investigate how English language teachers in Bangladeshi secondary schools perceive the promotion of creativity in the language classroom. Using Rhodes' (1961) 4Ps of creativity as the theoretical foundation for the survey, interview, and data analysis, three research questions and six related themes were developed to investigate teachers' perspectives. Along with teachers' views on creativity and associated challenges, these themes chiefly highlight teachers' perceptions towards the creative person, the creative process, creative output or product, and the creative classroom environment or press. The results, which are based on these six distinct themes, show that educators view creativity from a variety of perspectives with potential discrepancies between practice and perceptions.

**Keywords:** teachers' perception, fostering creativity, Bangladeshi EFL teachers, 4Ps of creativity

## INTRODUCTION

Creativity is one of the most dominating concepts of present-day education system around the world. The aim of today's education is not only to help learners develop their creativity but also to prepare them for an ever-changing, unpredictable world (Guilford, 1950; NACCCE, 1999; Vygotsky, 2004). In line with other fields of education, creativity has been a vital aspect of language teaching and learning, since linguistic creativity is treated as an exceptional property of all people rather than the only property of exceptional people (Carter, 2004). Although creativity is not the only important factor, it is in the countenance of effective language teaching, and without it, quality of teaching and learning suffers (Maley & Kiss, 2018). By integrating creative activities into English language teaching (ELT), the creative teacher promotes learners' creativity that can enhance personal growth and the development of society and culture (Papalazarou, 2015). In this regard, the role of the creative teacher plays the most significant role in fostering creativity in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitude towards creativity and its classroom application make

significant differences, since students learn through observing behaviors (Bandura, 1977). More importantly, only a creative teacher can provide learners with creative dimensions of exciting content, intriguing elements, and challenging tasks. They take risks, remain confident and knowledgeable, follow new ways of doing things, customize teaching according to the class demand, and uses technology to support the creative process (Richards & Cotterall, 2016).

However, the practice of classroom creativity differs from country to country, society to society, and culture to culture, depending on the contexts and the players. Though Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, South Korea, and India still bear the brunt of highly structured, traditional teacher-centred, classroom practices, the worldwide trend of classroom creativity has been accepted and interpreted in these countries considering their respective socio-cultural perspectives. For instance, Korean teachers' conceptualization of creativity and creative teaching partially aligns with the Western ideas and the distinctive Korean background of Confucianism, and the college entrance-oriented school culture reshapes and customizes the Western ideas of creativity (So, K., & Hu, Y., 2019). Likewise, the Bangladeshi highly structured, teacher-centred, classroom culture needs to be reshaped and redefined based on its socio-cultural background to maximize the benefits of creativity in the classroom.

In the world of academia, studies on secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of fostering creativity in the language classroom are scanty, while in Bangladesh this number is almost zero. Despite the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) in early 2000 and the creative curriculum in 2010 (Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014), the absence of creativity in the classroom practices of secondary school EFL teachers of Bangladesh is evident. Bangladeshi traditional teacher-centered classrooms hardly foster creativity because of teachers' belief and perceptions on creativity as well as some contextualized factors affecting them. Hence, this study attempts to explore Bangladeshi EFL teachers' knowledge and perceptions on fostering creativity in the language classroom and the factors affecting creative processes in the classroom context.

Taking Rhodes' (1961) 4Ps of creativity and some common concepts from literature as the theoretical framework for the interview questions, survey questionnaire, and corresponding data analysis, this study focuses mainly on six themes: (a) teachers' perception of the definition of creativity in the English language classroom, (b) teachers' perception of the creative person, (c) teachers' perception of the creative process, (d) teachers' perception of the creative product, (e) teachers' perception of the creative press or environment, and (f) teachers' perception of the factors affecting classroom creativity. Rhodes (1961) explained his definition of creativity in the abbreviated form of 4Ps:

**Person:** understanding characteristics or attributes of the creative person

**Process:** describing principles and methods and ways of thinking applied in the creative process

**Press:** examining the relationship between human beings and their environment (or press) and the context

**Product:** identifying tangible form of ideas (or product) and qualities of creative products

Using this framework, this study attempts to attain a holistic picture of Bangladeshi secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions about fostering creativity in the English language classroom and attempts to reframe the 4Ps of creativity through the lens of English language teaching. Three research questions were posed to attain the objectives of this study. These research questions are as follows:

- RQ1. How do Bangladeshi secondary school EFL teachers conceptualize fostering creativity in the classroom?
- RQ2. What qualities do the Bangladeshi secondary school EFL teachers associate with creative teachers, teaching, the environment, and output?
- RQ3. What challenges do teachers face in fostering creativity in their classroom?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Creativity is regarded as a common good for every field. It is perceived and experienced in diverse forms and features, and therefore it is difficult to define creativity in a single unique way. This is a new literacy that occupies the top of both Maslow's pyramid and Bloom's taxonomy, featuring the characteristics of unexpectedness, unpredictability, spontaneity, pleasurable surprise, and the acceptability of unconventional solutions to problems (Maley & Kiss, 2018). In the field of education, creativity is the combination of certain processes to be adopted by a creative teacher to cultivate creativity in the classroom so that learners can regularly produce something creative. Creativity does not mean something genetic or something that one is blessed with, rather it denotes a competence or skill that can be learned and practiced to become creative or more creative than before (Lehrer, 2012). Creativity, therefore, suggests a capacity and capability to exploit opportunities and develop ideas for solving problems (Batey, 2012). And to do all these, critical and reflective thinking patterns (Valtanen et al., 2008) as well as divergent and productive thinking (Dineen et al., 2005) are a must. According to Taylor (1988), creativity refers to the person, process, product, and context, either any of these factors alone or combined together, irrespective of any contradiction. It is found that many researchers (Cropley & Cropley, 2016; Runco, 2014; Torrance, 1965) attempt to define creativity through Rhodes' (1961) 4Ps framework: person, or creative individuals; product, or ideas and concrete expression of creativity; process, or the cognitive processes and causes that lead to creativity; and press, the relationship between human beings and their environment, which influences creativity.

This study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of creativity depending on "democratic definition" (NACCCE, 1999) which suggests that a creative teacher can foster creativity effectively following proper creative process in a creativity supportive

environment. Hence, teachers' opinions, their views and insights regarding creativity, the creative person, the creative process, the creative product, and the creative press or environment will be analyzed here in line with their present practice, problems, and prospects. Moreover, creativity has different functions and connotations based on the context and players in which it is examined and explored. For the purpose of this context-specific study on creativity, Runco's (2007) definition presents more precision and suitability. He asserted that creativity is a unique human quality that exposes our capacity to face changing circumstances and helps our cognitive abilities to combine and develop effectively upon being exposed to situations and ideas. It echoes the post-method pedagogy of shifting away from over-reliance on approaches and methods (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and focuses on the cognitive processes for effective language learning with creativity in the context of the Bangladeshi classroom.

According to Mercer (2000), creativity in language teaching is the presentation of a series of collaborative activities to be jointly accomplished by the teacher and students. And in English language teaching, this joint collaboration affords the opportunity of active engagement, freedom of choice, and reflective thinking on learning experience (Cremin, 2015). The EFL classroom is considered to be "a nest of creativity" where students take risks, use a new language, and get a joyful experience through more choices, engaging questions, and planning activities to generate various ideas (Piasecka, 2018, p. 89; Read, 2015). The Bangladeshi language teaching method is still mostly traditional, where students' autonomy suffers from non-engagement and passivity (Farooqui, 2014). Accordingly, learners need to be provided with ample scope for exercising and expressing their creativity, since each student possesses potential creative diversity and originality and have much to contribute, using their imagination, experience, and insight (Ostojic, 1975).

Teachers' classroom practice of creativity is closely connected to how they perceive the term "creativity" in relation to the English subject, syllabus, curriculum, and corresponding pedagogy (Craft, 2001). Understanding teachers' perceptions can help to understand the attitude of teachers as well as the pedagogic approaches they take in fostering creativity in the classroom, which can further help teacher trainers and policymakers to deal with creativity for pedagogic implications and curriculum reform (Cheung & Mok, 2013). Among different terms to describe teachers' ways of appreciating creativity (i.e., views, perspective, conceptualization, beliefs, cognition), this study considers the term "perception," which indicates teachers' general understanding and views on creativity, the creative person, the creative process, the creative product, and the creative environment. It also takes teachers' current "practice" as another important aspect to investigate the creative process and the factors affecting the fostering of creativity in secondary-level language classrooms of Bangladesh. Beghetto (2006) confirmed that teachers often possess negative attitudes and little tolerance for behaviors and attributes associated with fostering creativity in the classroom. And suppressing or encouraging creativity in a classroom context primarily depends on the perception and attitude of the teacher toward creativity (Beghetto, 2006), which is exactly what the current study attempts to investigate. In so doing, it provides necessary insights about secondary school EFL

teachers' perceptions of creativity, which may help to further develop teachers' ability in this field and launch necessary policy initiatives.

## **METHOD**

This study follows a mixed-method research approach, since the use of a combined approach can lead to a holistic understanding of the research problem with more in-depth analysis (Ayiro, 2012). Exploration is mainly emphasized in the present study, and therefore, qualitative data is collected, while quantitative data is used to support or supplement the qualitative data. For in-depth perceptions of secondary school EFL teachers, the collection and analysis of the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews were conducted first, followed by subsequent quantitative data collection via a questionnaire survey. In this study, two datasets have been collected to support the qualitative data with quantitative data.

### **Participants and Data Source (Qualitative Phase)**

For the qualitative phase of the study, a purposive sampling approach was applied to select participants with the best possible knowledge and information in the field (Merriam, 1998). For this purpose, six extremely interested secondary school EFL teachers were approached and invited to take part in the semi-structured face-to-face interview of 30–40 minutes. These teachers were experienced, qualified for EFL teaching (i.e., MA in English), and were from four renowned government schools of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

The interview questions followed the theoretical framework and chiefly focused on the definition of creativity, the 4Ps (i.e., person, process, product, and press/environment) of creativity, and the factors affecting the fostering of creativity in the Bangladeshi context. Each interview was a one-on-one, face-to-face session, and most of the participants preferred Bangla as their interview language, except Teacher Participant 4 (TP4), who gave his interview in English. A simple conversational tone and language was used to give the participants a relaxed and friendly atmosphere for sharing their opinions at their ease and comfort. Since the questions were open-ended, necessary hints and clues were used for further details and continuation. This helped the respondents to get engaged in friendly interactions with the author to express themselves more eloquently and freely (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Kvale, 1996). Finally, all the interviews were transcribed in full and categorized under each theme through repeated reading of the transcriptions.

### **Participants and Data Source (Quantitative Phase)**

One-hundred secondary school EFL teachers from four different government schools in the city of Rajshahi were contacted (face-to-face or online) and invited to take part in this study. The overall performance of these schools with their teaching effectiveness was taken into consideration to select these teachers. All 100 teachers

were asked to complete a questionnaire sent to them via the internet. However, the interview participants in the qualitative phase of the study were instrumental in communicating with the participants of quantitative phase as they were colleagues and also participants in an earlier stage of this research. The semi-structured open-ended interviews helped gathering in-depth information to design the questionnaire to be used for quantitative data collection, as there was no existing questionnaire that would be appropriate for the Bangladeshi EFL context.

## **Data Analysis**

For analyzing the qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify and report the patterns or themes found in the data set. A deductive approach was adopted here to focus on a particular aspect of the data that could be best investigated on the basis of a pre-existing theory or frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, the use of Rhodes' (1961) 4Ps (i.e., person, process, product, and press/environment) of creativity as the theoretical framework helped identify and define themes and categories in this study. The themes of "the definition of creativity" and "factors affecting the fostering of creativity" were adopted from other creativity-related studies found in the literature. Several steps were followed to analyze the data. After extensive thorough revision, some common responses under each predetermined theme were identified. Then, remarkable words, phrases, and sentences used by the teachers were selected to be used as quotations and phrases in the data reporting process. A theme-based comparative study of all the transcripts was conducted to make the data reporting thematically distinct and consistent.

For analyzing the quantitative data, this study depended on SPSS to generate descriptive statistics, since descriptive statistics provide a simple overview to get a holistic understanding of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Descriptive analysis helped to gain an overview of the quantitative findings, focusing on the particular themes and categories. The percentage and frequency of teachers' responses on a five-point Likert scale were calculated and analyzed to further support the qualitative interview data.

## **RESULTS**

With no drop-outs from either the interview or the questionnaire phases, this study presents the results of these two parts of the study. The qualitative findings from the one-to-one interviews are presented first, then the quantitative survey results are presented as supportive data for the qualitative findings. The theoretical framework of this study chiefly focuses on the six themes. The results are presented here under each of the six theme headings to make a comprehensive and inclusive analysis.

## Qualitative Findings

The interviews of six participants were transcribed under the six themes, and the participants' responses are coded as TP1 (Teacher Participant 1), TP2, TP3, TP4, TP5, and TP6 to anonymize their identities in the reporting process. The following section represents all six teachers' perception of creativity under the six themes to produce a comprehensive picture of Bangladeshi secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions on fostering creativity in the language classroom.

### **Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of the Definition of Creativity in the English Language Classroom**

In terms of classroom practice, the participants had different views and perceptions about the definition of creativity. Most of the teacher participants were of the view that creativity in language classrooms is a process of involving students in interactive and participatory classroom activities to bring out the latent talent of the learners. They thought that instructional approaches should be varied and creative to attract the learners in engaging and thought-provoking activities. However, the teachers differed on the widely accepted definition of creativity as creating something new and surprising. The following quotations from the participants are worth mentioning in this regard:

It is not always doing something new, big, and astonishing; rather doing regular work in a different way ... creativity means whether students learn in an interactive and engaging way ... variety in instruction is important... (TP1)

Creativity is not always creating something new ... it is involving students in independent activities that make them think differently and critically... (TP3)

It is a process to find out latent talent of the learners through various instructional strategies... (TP4)

Creativity in language classroom, to me, inspiring students to use their imagination for creating something new... (TP6)

### **Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Person**

Most of the participants thought that a creative teacher had to be friendly, familiar, and easily accessible. They should have good content knowledge, confidence, and the ability to do every task differently and interestingly. Maintaining good eye-contact, scaffolding the learners when necessary, making the classroom fun and humorous were also some of the necessary roles that a creative teacher had to play, according to the results. The creative teacher should be a good actor and should not dominate the class, rather they should be a part of the class. They should have moral courage and a strong ethical stand. To make the classroom questions and mistakes friendly, a fear-free, relaxed, and non-judgmental environment should be provided by the creative teacher. The following comments of the teacher participants reflect the characteristics of a creative teacher from different angles:

A creative teacher is knowledgeable, confident, and competent enough in organizing his class differently and according to the demand of the context... (TP1)

Teacher should be a facilitator, helper, and apparently a passive teacher ... he welcomes questions and makes things easy... (TP2)

Creative teacher should be imaginative, patient, and a man of humor ... he should appreciate students' work and welcome their mistakes... (TP3)

He should not dominate the class and have good connection with the class... (TP4)

A creative teacher should be a man of strong moral character ... he has to develop the innate moral character of the students through creative instructions... (TP5)

A creative teacher should not be rude to his students ... he has to be patient ... a role model to the students. (TP6)

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Process**

The participants' perceptions of the creative process were investigated in terms of their current practice and experience. Making the classroom student-centered, engaging the learners in different interactive activities (i.e., brainstorming, individual work, pair work, and group work), providing learners' autonomy, and using technology to spur the class were explained to be some of the remarkable processes adopted by the teacher participants in their classroom practice. One participant advocated CLT as supportive to creativity while another participant criticized the use of any fixed method, since the context and players are always unique. Their responses included the following:

I use brain-storming, pair work, group work techniques to engage my students for frequent interactions among themselves using English language at its best.... I believe this processes can ignite learners' creativity in language learning... (TP1)

To make my classroom a student-centred one, I try to start my class with a surprise ... try to involve the learners through group tasks ... each time, I try to do something different and never follow the same old techniques... (TP2)

I don't believe in any fixed pedagogy or method or approach, since creativity has no boundary and every student, as well as classroom context, is unique ... I often customize my techniques according to classroom demand... (TP3)

I follow CLT method to make my classroom student-centred and foster creativity ... various group and individual tasks are given to increase interactions and engagement... (TP4)

### **Theme 4: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Product**

Students' creativity, their innovative ideas, are the final goal of fostering creativity in the language classroom. When students come up with their thoughts and ideas, teachers' responses to these ideas are important, since they further advance or retard the creative process. Most of the participants of this study thought that proper appreciation and recognition could work as motivation for the individual student, the

whole class, and the school as well. How they deal with students' creative output is expressed below:

I think, a thing of creativity should be recognized at all levels (i.e., personal, institutional, national, and international) depending on its merit and usefulness... (TP1)

I personally appreciate every single idea, present before the class ... sometimes creative work is hung on the wall or school board ... chocolate or pen is given to reward the students... (TP2)

I think learners creative production should be celebrated and circulated widely across the whole students for further motivation... (TP3)

Creative outputs need to be acknowledged, published, and rewarded for further fostering of classroom creativity... (TP5)

Appreciating and praising ideas work, students get motivated to engage in further creative activities... (TP6)

### **Theme 5: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Press/Environment**

All of the teacher participants were of the view that a creative classroom environment is the foremost condition for fostering creativity in the language classroom. If the learners feel relaxed to express their ideas freely, they can engage themselves fully in classroom activities. Though their current classroom practice is still traditional due to several constraints, the teachers thought that a friendly, non-judgmental, fear-free classroom is necessary for fostering creativity in the language classroom. Their responses included the following:

Creative classroom has to ensure a relaxed environment ... it has to be questions friendly and fully student-centred... (TP1)

Language classroom should be noisy. ... Students must be given full autonomy and freedom to do their classroom tasks. (TP2)

Engaging and motivating environment is a must. (TP3)

Friendly and relaxed classroom.... Heterogeneous categories should be maintained in group activities to ensure participation of learners of all levels. (TP4)

The environment should be non-judgmental. (TP5)

Teachers' attitude has to be fear free, frank, and easily accessible. ... He has to listen and give attention to every learner equally. (TP6)

### **Theme 6: Teachers' Perceptions of the Factors Affecting Classroom Creativity**

The factors affecting classroom creativity as expressed by the participants were manifold, differing on the context and the players. Large class size, limited class duration, huge workload, lack of proper training, and motivation were the common factors that the participants identified as the constraints of fostering creativity in the language classroom. In addition, a few teachers are of the view that the centralized curriculum and board examinations compelled them to finish the syllabus in a given time period. Consequently, they focused on preparing students for public examinations

not creative learning. TP3 thought that institutional and colleague support was zero while TP4 thought otherwise. Let us examine the key points in the teachers' words:

My class is huge ... more than 80 students in a little classroom. ... I have no proper training on creative classroom practice. ... Finishing huge syllabus within time and preparing students for board examination is my prime concern. ... I think use of technology can motivate creativity. (TP1)

Too much workload hampers my classroom practice. ... I do many clerical jobs like students' registration, form fill-up for board examination, going to education board for different administrative purpose of the school. ... The textbook is fully creativity supportive but the assessment system is just opposite. (TP2)

Creative classroom usually becomes noisy, but my school authority and most colleagues can not accept it, since they believe in traditional pin-drop silent good classroom. ... Textbook is partially supportive and the assessment system welcome rote learning. (TP3)

Traditional mentality of the teachers with wrong perception is the main hindrance to fostering creativity. ... Otherwise, we have all support from the authority and colleagues. (TP4)

Proper motivation for both teachers and students are necessary for classroom creativity. ... Use of technology can promote creativity in the classroom, I think. (TP6)

## **Quantitative Findings**

Quantitative data through the questionnaire were divided into seven parts: Part 1 was demographic information on the participants, and the subsequent parts (Parts 2–7) were about the six themes of this study. As a mixed-method exploratory study with maximum weighing on qualitative findings, the 4Ps-driven descriptive analysis with frequency and percentages of participants' responses supported the qualitative data significantly. Results of each part are presented individually in the following sections.

### **Demographic Information on the Teachers**

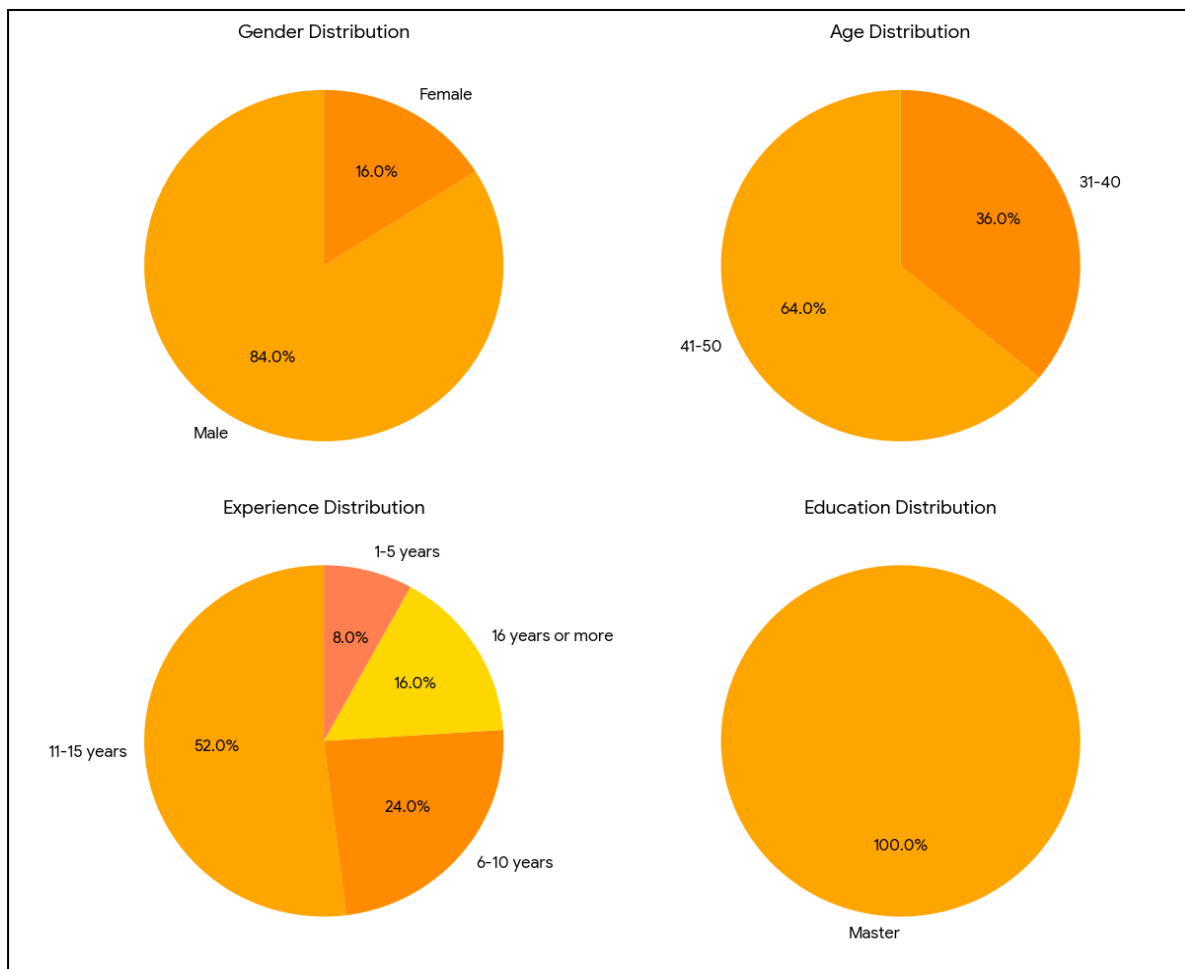
Among the 100 participants (100%) in the questionnaire survey, 16 participants were female and 84 participants were male. Thirty-six participants were between the ages of 31 and 40, while the other 64 participants were in the group between 41 and 50 years of age. Most of the teachers were experienced: There were 16 teachers with 16 years and more of experience, 52 teachers with 11–15 years, 24 teachers with 6–10 years, and 8 teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience. All of the participants (100%) had masters-level educational qualifications (see Figure 1).

### **Theme 1: Teachers' Perception of Creativity in the Language Classroom**

Table A1 (see Appendix A) summarizes teachers' perception of creativity in their classroom context. Most of the participants ( $n = 88$ , or 88%) either agreed or strongly agreed that language use is a creative act and that creativity means creating

something new and original. Again, 92% of the participants were of the view that creativity requires using the imagination and thinking out of the box. On teaching and assessing creativity, participants had mixed opinions: 44% agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible to assess and teach creativity, 36% remained neutral and 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Surprisingly, 96% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that in language teaching, creativity is about using strategies to foster the learners' engagement and motivation to learn. Also, 84% of the teachers favored the necessity of competencies, techniques, and instructional materials to cultivate creativity in the English language classroom.

**FIGURE 1. Demographic Information on the Teacher Participants**



### Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Person

As shown in Table A2 (see Appendix B), most of the teacher participants (96%; i.e., 48% *strongly agree*, 48% *agree*) supported the belief that a creative teacher is a role model, risk-taker, and customizer of their teaching contextually. Again, a majority of the participants (88%) either agreed or strongly agreed that a creative teacher is not the controller of the class but rather a part of it. Teachers' playful attitude and being open to the creative process were also favored (i.e., 36% *strongly agree*, 56% *agree*) by a majority of the participants (92%). Also, many participants (80%) opposed (i.e., 40% *strongly disagree*, 40% *disagree*) the rigidity of the teacher towards making

mistakes. Moreover, students' intrinsic motivation and openness to experiences in creative language classes was supported (i.e., 16% *strongly agree*, 72% *agree*) by a majority of the teacher participants (88%). However, in terms of teacher's confidence and content knowledge, 60% of the participants thought they were necessary for classroom creativity.

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Process**

Table A3 (see Appendix C) summarizes the teachers' perceptions of the creative process. All the participants, although in different frequencies, (i.e., 20% *always*, 32% *often*, and 48% *sometimes*), use different strategies, technologies, and teaching aids to fostering classroom creativity. Not only that, all the participants (i.e., 16% *always*, 48% *often*, and 36% *sometimes*) use authentic materials to integrate learners' real-life experience into the classroom situation. Most of the participants (i.e., 08% *always*, 44% *often*, and 36% *sometimes*) tried to promote divergent thinking, while customizing text according to learners' needs was done by 92% of the teachers at different frequencies (i.e., 28% *always*, 40% *often*, and 24% *sometimes*). Likewise, 92% of them (i.e., 16% *always*, 40% *often*, and 36% *sometimes*) used brainstorming, pair work, and group work to increase learners' engagement and interactions. A majority of the teachers (i.e., 4% *always*, 28% *often*, and 40% *sometimes*) did the unexpected, switched the order, or changed their class routine to maintain creativity in their classroom. It is noteworthy that the frequencies and percentages in Table A3 show lower frequencies in *always* and higher frequencies in *often* and *sometimes*.

### **Theme 4: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Product**

As shown in Table A4 (see Appendix D), most of the participants (84%) either agreed or strongly agreed with Statement 1, while 80% supported Statement 2. Ninety-two percent of the participants thought that creative production was not replication but constructing something new and innovative. Most of the teachers (i.e., 40% *strongly agree*, 48% *agree*) believed that rewarding learners ideas motivates further classroom creativity. Eighty percent either strongly agreed or agreed that creative products are always novel, original, and useful.

### **Theme 5: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Press/Environment**

As can be seen in Table A5 (see Appendix E), almost all of the participants (96%) either agreed or strongly agreed that a proper classroom atmosphere is a must for fostering creativity. Likewise, 96% believed that students can ask any question and make many mistakes in a creative language classroom. A majority of the teachers (i.e., 20% *strongly agree*, 68% *agree*) also thought that a creative language classroom should welcome varied ideas and experimentations. As for teachers' own classroom situations, 72% of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with Statement 4. Surprisingly, only 52% of the teachers were in favor of a relaxed, non-judgmental classroom for fostering creativity.

### **Theme 6: Teachers' Perceptions of Factors Affecting Classroom Creativity**

As shown in Table A6 (see Appendix F), most of the participants (i.e., 40% *strongly agree*, 48% *agree*) perceived large class size as a hindrance to fostering creativity. Eighty percent (i.e., 16% *strongly agree*, 64% *agree*) needed more time to foster creativity in large classes. Similarly, 80% of the teachers (i.e., 20% *strongly agree*, 60% *agree*) supported Statement 3. A majority of the participants (92%) thought that extra workload, lack of proper training, and lack of teachers' self-motivation were factors negatively affecting classroom creativity. Ninety-six percent of the participants (i.e., 28% *strongly agree*, 68% *agree*) needed additional materials and technological support for classroom creativity. However, the teachers had diverse opinions on preparing students for examinations (i.e., 52% disagreed and 40% agreed with Statement 4), on institutional and colleague support (i.e., 40% disagreed, 36% agreed, and 24% remained neutral to Statement 6), and on the current syllabus and textbook (i.e., 40% disagreed and 40% remained neutral to Statement 7).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity in the English Language Classroom**

In the language classroom context, this study suggests that creativity is inherent in language learning, and it promotes creating something new through the use of the imagination and thinking out of the box. It refers to using imagination, changing existing ideas, making something original and innovative, and having the vision and freedom to proceed with new and unusual ways of doing things (Rosenberg, 2015). The findings emphasize that creativity in the language classroom is not necessarily something very special and focused on for a selected few or particular days, rather, as Fehér (2015) suggested, it is an everyday job to be fostered regularly through classroom activities. Creativity, in language classroom context, implies the use of strategies and techniques that can ensure learners' engagement and effective interaction in the classroom to bring out the latent talent of the students. This echoes the approach "teaching for creativity" that emphasizes developing learners' own creative thinking through engagement, interaction, and active collaboration in a stimulating learning environment (NACCCE, 1999). However, their conceptualization of creative teaching is different from the conventional Asian classroom, where students are silent and teachers primarily speak, following hierarchical connections and highlighting the value of humility (Kim, 2007; Kim et al., 2011).

### **Theme 2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Person**

Bangladeshi teachers' perceptions of the creative person focused mainly on the role, responsibilities, and characteristics of a creative teacher in the classroom setting. The participants viewed the creative teacher as a friendly and easily accessible person

who can take risks, challenge their pupils, and customize their teaching according to the needs and interests of the class. To them, risk-taking indicates a teacher's flexible mindset, willingness to re-think or revise, and willingness to experiment, although it may not work out as planned (Richards, 2013). A creative teacher should welcome mistakes and cordially accept any type of question from the learners. They become a role model, since it is of no use preaching creativity to students without practicing it themselves (Maley & Peachey, 2015). The creative teacher, according to the participants, needs to possess required content knowledge and training to foster creativity in the language classroom. In this connection, Richards (2013) favored experienced teachers and said that creativity in language teaching means having familiarity with a wide range of strategies and techniques that teachers can utilize to avoid established procedures and apply their own solutions. The participants also emphasized the necessity of good moral character of the teacher to build the character of the students, which echoes the Korean teachers' concept of "character-building" education prioritizing conventional morality and values (K. So & Y. Hu, 2019).

### **Theme 3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Process**

The strategies and approaches taken by the participants to generate creative thinking among the learners in the language classroom were considered as creative processes. To make the classroom a student-centered creative one, the teachers used various engaging activities (i.e., brainstorming, group work, individual work, pair work), tried to promote divergent thinking, introduce technology, used authentic language learning materials, and above all, tried to do things differently. All of these approaches are compatible with NACCCE's framework of creative teaching (1999). It is noteworthy that these creative processes or techniques are not applied regularly and consistently, but rather they are applied occasionally due to potential constraints (to be discussed in Theme 6). Teachers have considerable knowledge and ideas about the creative processes, but in practice, they do not or cannot apply them regularly.

### **Theme 4: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Product**

With novelty and originality, teachers emphasized the usefulness of a creative product, which is aligned with the concept that the standard definition of creative product implies (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999; Fryer & Collings, 1991; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2007; Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Ryhammar & Brolin, 1999; Sawyer, 2006). Teachers believed that the creative output of learners should be appreciated and rewarded, since it helps to develop a "growth mind-set," providing proper encouragement and motivation for further creativity as well. The findings of this study emphasize publication of students' creative work, which can further motivate the students towards creativity. Malay (2015) suggested such publication as a way of fostering creativity in the English language classroom.

## **Theme 5: Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Press/Environment**

The findings of the study place much emphasis on the importance of the classroom environment, since it is closely connected with the activities and circumstances in which creativity takes place and develops (Fryer, 1996). In terms of a relaxed and non-judgmental classroom environment, the qualitative findings of this study slightly contradict the quantitative ones. Although in the interviews all the teachers supported a non-judgmental and relaxed classroom atmosphere, in the questionnaire survey, half of the participants expressed different views about it. However, establishing a relaxed non-judgmental atmosphere is a must, since it helps students feel confident to act and dispels the worries of being scrutinized (Maley, 2015). An adverse classroom environment can have such a negative effect that the creative person may not recognize their creative faculty (Sternberg, 2006). Teachers, therefore, need to be ready to accept mistakes and errors as an integral part of the overall learning process. They should avoid correcting learners explicitly, since it will reduce their willingness to express themselves and take risks (Kurtz, 2015).

## **Theme 6: Teachers' Perceptions of Factors Affecting Classroom Creativity**

Contextual barriers affect classroom practice, making some pedagogic approaches challenging and sometimes futile for teachers. This study identifies large class size to be a major negative factor, which is also supported by number of studies. For instance, unusual class size makes learners passive, reduces their engagement and motivation, and creates anonymity (Biggs, 1999; Carbone & Greenberg, 1998; Ward & Jenkins, 1992). However, Wanous et al. (2009) asserted that "large class size is increasingly less accepted as an excuse for not adopting new more effective approaches" (p. 79). Excessive workload has emerged to be another big hindrance that is already acknowledged by creativity research in the UK (Creative Partnerships, 2006), where some participants avoided fostering creativity due to heavy workloads. Moreover, the conflict between policy and practice, more particularly regarding the centralized curriculum, syllabus, textbook and assessment system has been investigated in this research to be a major hinderance to classroom creativity. Furthermore, teachers rely on the textbook, while few textbooks provide activities necessary for fostering creativity (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013). Availability of suitable materials, use of technology, and proper institutional and colleague support can positively affect the fostering of creativity.

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION**

The insight and knowledge provided by this study aims to help concerned researchers understand phenomena in the Bangladeshi classroom context. This study agrees with previous studies that the 4Ps (i.e., person, process, product,

press/environment ) of creativity are interrelated, that creativity means creating something new and useful; that the creative teacher plays a vital role by adopting different creative processes; that the creative process denotes numerous strategies and methods; that the creative environment is a friendly relaxed environment that gives learners maximum ease to express themselves, and that contextual constraints with poor policy initiatives hinder the regular practice of creativity (Craft, 2001; Fryer, 1996; Rhodes, 1961; Runco, 1997; Wallace, 1926).

For the Bangladeshi EFL classroom, the findings of this research have substantial practical implications that clearly suggest the necessity to promote creativity in the language classroom. It has been identified through prior research that ELT in Bangladesh has failed to develop learners' competence in English (Alam, 2015; Alam & Kabir, 2015; Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Shohel & Banks, 2010). The findings of this study can be used by teachers, teacher trainers, and policymakers to improve the quality of teaching and learning by adopting the necessary pedagogic approaches for creating a creative EFL classroom.

The small sample size from a particular region of the country and the exclusion of the students' perceptions can hardly be generalized to represent the country as a whole. Therefore, further research with larger sample size, including teachers and students from every representative part of the country, is necessary to understand the nature and characteristics of classroom creativity as well as the problems and prospects of applying creativity in Bangladeshi secondary language classrooms. A comparative study between the perceptions of teachers and students could further provide deep insight on the topic.

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## APPENDIX A

**TABLE A1. Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity in the English Language Classroom**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Language use is a creative act.	40%	48%	08%	04%	00%
2. Creativity means to create something new and original.	40%	48%	12%	00%	00%
3. Creativity can be taught and assessed.	16%	28%	36%	16%	04%
4. Creativity implies the use of imagination and thinking out of the box.	36%	56%	08%	00%	00%
5. Creativity in language teaching is about strategies that foster learners' engagement and motivation to learn.	36%	60%	04%	00%	00%
6. Competencies, techniques, and instructional materials are necessary to cultivate creativity in the English language classroom.	36%	48%	08%	08%	00%

## APPENDIX B

**TABLE A2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Person**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. A creative teacher becomes a role model, takes risks, and customize, their teaching strategies according to the context and the learners.	48%	48%	04%	00%	00%
2. Teachers' confidence and knowledge of subject content have little to do with the process of classroom creativity.	04%	28%	08%	44%	16%
3. A creative teacher is rigid concerning learners' mistakes.	00%	16%	04%	40%	40%
4. A creative teacher is a part of, not the controller of, the class.	40%	48%	04%	08%	00%
5. The teacher having a playful attitude and being open to a wide variety of inputs, processes, and outputs are necessary to foster creativity in language classroom.	36%	56%	08%	00%	00%
6. Students have to be intrinsically motivated, autonomous, and open to experiences in a creative language classroom.	16%	72%	08%	04%	00%

## APPENDIX C

**TABLE A3. Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Process**

Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. I use different strategies, technologies, and teaching aids to foster creativity in my classroom.	20%	32%	48%	00%	00%
2. I incorporate creativity using activities with multiple possible answers to promote learners' divergent thinking.	08%	44%	36%	04%	08%
3. I use authentic materials to associate topics with the learners' real-life experiences.	16%	48%	36%	00%	00%
4. I modify and adapt texts in a way that responds to learners' needs, interest, and levels.	28%	40%	24%	08%	00%
5. I incorporate brainstorming, pair work, and group work to maximize engagement and foster creativity.	16%	40%	36%	04%	04%
6. I do the opposite; I switch the order and change my routine for classroom creativity.	04%	28%	40%	20%	08%

## APPENDIX D

**TABLE A4. Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Product**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Creative product is the outcome of a creative process applied by a creative teacher in a creative classroom atmosphere.	24%	60%	12%	04%	00%
2. In language teaching, the main product appears as written samples or oral performances.	08%	72%	16%	04%	00%
3. In creative production, learners do not replicate or copy, rather they construct something new and innovative.	24%	68%	08%	16%	00%
4. Rewarding learners' ideas or production can motivate classroom creative practices.	40%	48%	12%	00%	00%
5. Creative products are always novel, original, useful and a thing of surprise.	36%	44%	12%	08%	00%

## APPENDIX E

**TABLE A5. Teachers' Perceptions of the Creative Press/Environment**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Ensuring the right classroom atmosphere is central to fostering creativity.	28%	68%	04%	00%	00%
2. A creative language classroom should be supportive of different ideas, remarks, and experimentations.	20%	68%	12%	00%	00%
3. A non-judgmental, relaxed classroom environment is necessary for fostering creativity.	16%	36%	32%	16%	00%
4. Students can make many mistakes and ask any question in a creative language classroom.	44%	52%	04%	00%	00%
5. My classroom environment supports learners' autonomy, independence, and flexibility.	64%	08%	12%	16%	00%

## APPENDIX F

**TABLE A6. Teachers' Perceptions of Factors Affecting Classroom Creativity**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Large class size hinders my classroom practice for creativity.	40%	48%	08%	04%	00%
2. I need more time to foster creativity in my large classes.	16%	64%	12%	08%	00%
3. A centralized, tight curriculum with a high-stakes board examination discourages creative teaching and learning practices.	20%	60%	08%	12%	00%
4. I focus mainly on preparing my students for their examinations.	04%	36%	08%	48%	04%
5. Extra workload hampers my creative classroom practices.	20%	72%	04%	04%	00%
6. I get proper institutional and colleague support to foster creativity in my classroom.	00%	36%	24%	32%	08%
7. The current syllabus and textbooks are suitable for cultivating creativity in my classroom.	00%	20%	40%	36%	04%
8. I need additional training for properly fostering of creativity in my classroom.	36%	56%	04%	04%	00%
9. I need additional materials and technological support for maintaining creativity in my classroom.	28%	68%	04%	00%	00%
10. Self-motivation of the teacher can facilitate the fostering of creativity in the language classroom.	24%	68%	08%	00%	00%



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## **Brief Reports**

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# Activities for Engagement and Enjoyment in the University EFL Classroom

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**Daniel Anderson and Jeffrey Maxwell**

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This paper explores the historical background of English education in Japan and Korea and how different types of motivation have arisen within these contexts. Within EFL settings, guidelines are provided to assist teachers in cultivating the motivational potential of the classroom through the lens of engagement and enjoyment. These guidelines are based on years of studies by motivational EFL researcher Kikuchi. From the authors' teaching experiences, four activities are presented that incorporate Kikuchi's guidelines along with motivational research from other scholars in the field of SLA. To engage and stimulate students in the classroom, we present brainstorming, mingling, *shiritori*, and comprehensive projects. These activities include instructions for classroom implementation and can help EFL teachers bring a sense of engagement and enjoyment to their classes.

## INTRODUCTION

Motivation is generally accepted as a basic and vital element in educational settings, underpinning development in language learning (Dörnyei, 1994). Yet, for all the insights gained over the years, teachers may still find themselves struggling to get their students engaged. This is especially true for teachers who have classes composed of students who are only attending to fulfill compulsory credits. Our own experiences from working at a private university in Japan provide a good illustration of the challenges facing instructors who are teaching students who have limited interest in learning English.

### Educational Background

In both Japan and Korea, English is taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools. Jones (2019) noted that the Japanese government had set initiatives for Communicative English to be taught in schools. However, exam requirements have led teachers to keep to teacher-centered, grammar-translation approaches to English instruction (Goto Butler, 2015). Likewise, pressure on students to do well academically in Korea leads to exam-conscious students, which in turn places demands on English teachers to emphasize skills such as reading and grammar so that students can perform well on tests (Cho, 2004).

Moving on to the university, Jones (2019) stated that while most students in Japan will need to study English, the number who choose English as a major is scant, obliging many to take a subject they otherwise are not interested in. Similarly, in Korea it is mandatory for students at the freshman level to take English courses irrespective of their actual interest in the subject (Kim & Kim, 2019). Given the realities of education in Japan and Korea, it is easy to see how many students may not be motivated to learn English. To understand how motivation is affected, in the next section we will explore the different types of motivation that language researchers have identified.

### **Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Instrumental Motivation**

Motivational literature makes a distinction between types of motivations. Dörnyei (2001) posited that *intrinsic motivation* is related to behavior that is carried out for its own sake to experience the pleasure associated with the activity. In contrast, *extrinsic motivation* is concerned with decisions made and efforts spent on activities in expectation of a reward that exists apart from oneself (Brown & Lee, 2015). In addition, another well-known concept within motivational literature is *instrumental motivation*. Wong (2011) postulated that instrumental motivation is derived from a desire in language learners to learn the target language for perceived useful purposes that can be related to areas such as work and social status.

Looking at the relevance of motivation among university students in East Asia, Irie (2003) noted that, in her review of motivation for English language learning in Japan, Japanese university students are apt to value the instrumental worth in learning English for tests and job prospects. Furthermore, Caballero and Yu (2023) argued that the presence of intrinsic motivation is associated with positive outcomes, but extrinsic motivation performs a large role in education, and differences in the origin of learner drive may vary due to social and cultural environments. Regardless of a student's reasons for studying English at university, a relationship exists between these motivations and how the student engages and enjoys learning that language.

### **Engagement and Enjoyment**

The concept of *engagement* refers generally to “the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes” (Kuh, 2009, as cited in Liu & Feng, 2023, p. 2). Fredericks et al. (2004) stated that student engagement involves active participation among students in following rules, ardently working on something, and focusing intently on the process of teaching and learning. Similarly, Skinner and Blemont (1993) added that student engagement is essential to the EFL classroom because it reveals the degree to which students pay attention, make effort, persevere, and commit to the learning process.

One factor found to have an outsized effect on student engagement for second language learning is *enjoyment* (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2016; Liu, 2022). Li et al. (2018) posited enjoyment as “good feelings coming from breaking through homeostatic limits and stretching beyond oneself to accomplishing something new or

unexpected, especially in face of some difficult tasks” (p. 5). Dewaele and Macintyre (2014) postulated that when enjoyment occurs, the psychological needs of students are met, and there is a sense of joy in the classroom experience. Furthermore, a study by Zhang and Tsung (2021) showed a robust association between enjoyment and motivation for Chinese EFL university students.

It is important to note the role that the teacher plays in student engagement and enjoyment in the classroom. In their 2022 study, Barus and Devira showed that the most important variable in improving student engagement was teacher support through interactions with students. Li et al. (2018) noted that teachers can positively affect student engagement with tasks in the classroom by facilitating student-to-student interactions in the target language. Likewise, when looking at enjoyment, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) posited that teacher behavior is the chief factor for second language student enjoyment. Kikuchi’s (2015) investigation into demotivation identified some key strategies and teacher behaviors that support student engagement and classroom enjoyment.

### **Kikuchi’s Guidelines**

Kikuchi’s (2015) investigation into demotivation in the EFL classroom underscored the role of teachers and materials in shaping student motivation and enjoyment. Kikuchi’s work culminated in his 2015 book titled *Demotivation in Second Language Acquisition: Insights into Japan*. We would like to illuminate some of the key recommendations from the book here as they relate to the activities presented in the next section.

Kikuchi emphasized helping students see the benefits of language learning beyond the mandatory class credit, enabling them to grasp the why of their language studies. He also pointed out the importance of material selection, noting that a range of factors should be considered, including age, interests, teacher preferences, and curriculum requirements.

Regarding the implementation of class activities, Kikuchi stressed the need for clear instructions, labeling unclear instructions as an example of teacher misbehavior. He accentuated the importance of task variety while conveying the purpose of each activity to the students. Finally, he encouraged teachers to give constructive feedback to the students, interpreting any perceived failures of students not as related to their ability but rather to the amount of effort they put forth, that is, adopting a growth mindset.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES**

In this section, we introduce four activities that can be employed in the classroom to activate engagement and enjoyment. Drawing from Kikuchi’s (2015) motivational framework suggestions, effective EFL instruction requires establishing basic motivational conditions through a supportive classroom atmosphere, generating

initial motivation by communicating the value of language learning beyond exams, maintaining learner motivation through clear and purposeful tasks, and encouraging positive self-evaluation through constructive feedback that emphasizes effort over ability. To address these key motivational components, we present brainstorming as a collaborative warm-up activity that builds supportive group dynamics while priming students' existing knowledge. We introduce mingling as an interactive communication task that provides meaningful practice opportunities and helps students see the practical value of their language skills. Next, we describe *shiritori*, a word-play game using word-final letters or sounds to start new words, as a culturally familiar game that sustains enjoyment and engagement through varied, purposeful practice while building confidence through challenges. Finally, we outline how comprehensive projects can be used to sustain learning experiences through constructive feedback, clear goal-setting, and authentic communication opportunities to foster long-term motivation and development of a growth mindset.

## **Brainstorming**

For our first activity, we would like to introduce brainstorming. Many teachers are probably already familiar with this activity but may not be aware of the benefits as well as different variations. Brainstorming in the classroom involves students listing ideas, concepts, or vocabulary related to a word or category and can be implemented for a single student or for large groups and anywhere in between. When used as a group activity, it is a good way to get students to work towards a common goal, which ties into Kikuchi's suggestion of involving teamwork in the classroom to get students engaged. Furthermore, brainstorming can be used as a warm-up that segues to the lesson topic, as it primes the schema, getting students familiar with the material they will be focusing on in the lesson.

To carry out brainstorming as a group activity, have one student in each group work as the "reporter" who writes down the ideas of the students in the group as well as adding their own ideas. It is often a good idea to have students work with a time limit as opposed to a set number of items. For example, if you ask the groups to list ten different types of jobs, some groups may finish ahead of other groups, leading to issues of classroom time management. However, setting a time limit of two minutes ensures that the groups finish at the same time, even if some groups have come up with a longer list than others. From here, one student from each group goes to the whiteboard and writes down their list of items. We recommend that this person goes to the whiteboard without the list in hand, and the teacher can encourage the group members sitting at their desk to call out the items on the list to the student at the whiteboard who then writes them down.

An extension activity to brainstorming is to have students from other groups check the lists created on the whiteboard. The students can check if the lists have suitable words for each category and if the words are spelled correctly. This can be a good way for students to get feedback that is used for each group as opposed to individuals.

## Mingling

One of the most useful activities to encourage students to talk is mingling, which incorporates group engagement and established classroom routines to provide meaningful interaction and authentic practice opportunities. Through mingling activities at the beginning of classes, students enter an interactive environment where they immediately engage with familiar concepts before encountering new material, an approach that reflects Kikuchi's (2015) principles for sustaining language learner motivation. These tasks effectively activate existing knowledge structures, helping students build mental bridges between what they already know and what they will encounter in the lesson. Students engage in relevant discussion tasks that connect their prior learning experiences to upcoming content, enabling them to more effectively process, comprehend, and retain new information while building communicative confidence.

Mingling requires students to move around the classroom and talk with their classmates, gathering information through structured conversations and taking notes on their interactions. In larger classes, teachers can organize students into teams where members interact with people from other teams while continuing to document their conversations. The setup can be as straightforward as writing guiding questions on the board alongside model responses that incorporate language skills previously studied or currently being introduced. Teachers can also develop more comprehensive worksheets that provide structured templates for students to follow (for an example, see Appendix). During the activity, teachers walk around the classroom to listen, make corrections as needed, write helpful responses on the board, or join conversations to model appropriate language use.

The activity concludes with a debriefing stage where students share the information they have gathered. This can be as simple as having students summarize and present their findings to another classmate, or teachers can call on students to share with the entire class. Students might also produce writing, recordings, or posters based on their conversations. The mingling format can be extended beyond a single class period to become part of a larger project or serve as a recurring task that students revisit throughout a lesson to practice and refine their communication skills, providing varied practice opportunities while maintaining focus on communicative competence and cultural interaction within the English language community.

## Shiritori

*Shiritori* is a popular word game in Japan that literally translates to “taking the end.” The Korean equivalent to shiritori is *kkeunmal-itgi* (끝말잇기). As the name suggests, the last character or letter in a word is used. The main rule of shiritori is fairly straightforward. The last letter or character of a word is used as the beginning of a new word. For example, if the first word was “rabbit,” the last letter, “t,” is used as the start of the next word (e.g., rabbit → temple). If playing only orally in class, the word-final sound would start the new word, (e.g., temple → love).

Shiritori can be carried out as a group activity where teams race to write down as many words as possible within a given time frame. Since students in Japan and Korea are already familiar with the game, the teacher can save class time by avoiding a lengthy explanation of the rules. Shiritori can be adapted to different educational needs. For example, if lower-level students are preparing for the TOEIC test, the teacher can help students review parts of speech by doing the activity for categories such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Additionally, as an extension activity, students can be asked to make a sentence connecting words from different categories. Using the aforementioned example of parts of speech, students can work together with their group to connect words from nouns, verbs, and adjectives to form a sentence. Finally, shiritori is easy to implement in class because there is very little set-up involved. All that is required is a chalkboard/whiteboard and chalk/markers.

### **Comprehensive Projects**

In order to incorporate Kikuchi's (2015) recommendations for constructive feedback with a growth mindset and providing a variety of tasks with a clear purpose, semester-long comprehensive projects can be designed to create opportunities for sustained engagement while addressing key motivational factors that support language learning success. This approach communicates the value of language learning beyond examination requirements by connecting classroom tasks to meaningful communication goals that students can envision using in real-world contexts (Kikuchi, 2015). Through breaking larger communicative tasks into manageable components, students experience frequent small successes that build confidence and maintain motivation throughout the learning process. Teachers can help students set both short-term weekly goals and long-term project goals, creating realistic expectations about language development while demonstrating clear connections between individual lessons and broader communicative competence.

The implementation of comprehensive projects centers on scaffolded activities that build toward a comprehensive final task, with ongoing feedback that helps students attribute their progress to effort and strategic learning rather than innate ability. Each weekly component focuses on specific language elements while maintaining a clear purpose within the larger project framework. Students work in randomly assigned groups that change weekly, naturally mixing the varying proficiency levels and strengths within the class. This structure allows students to interact with different peers and experience diverse collaborative dynamics, fostering peer support. Throughout the activities, teachers provide immediate general feedback, followed by detailed individual feedback on recorded or written work between classes. This dual feedback approach allows for both quick reflection and deeper analysis, helping students understand their growth trajectory while receiving constructive guidance for continued improvement.

An example of a comprehensive project that follows this approach is a story poster presentation project. Weekly in-class activities scaffold students through weeks of focused practice on individual narrative elements, beginning with introductions and

listening skills before progressing through describing people, places, and events with guided practice prompts. Students work in randomly assigned groups that change weekly, naturally mixing proficiency levels while receiving immediate general feedback during activities and detailed individual feedback on recorded work between sessions. As they progress from basic descriptions to integrated storytelling, students share mini-narratives using target structures, creating continuous cycles of practice and improvement. Each week's focused success builds confidence for the comprehensive final presentations, where students demonstrate their ability to construct complete personal narratives independently, connecting classroom learning to meaningful communication goals beyond academic requirements.

This method reflects Kikuchi's (2015) emphasis on using varied motivational strategies to maintain learner engagement, particularly through providing clear task purposes, opportunities for success, and constructive feedback that focuses on effort and growth. Students generate their own content while teachers facilitate learning, creating authentic communication contexts where weekly efforts contribute visibly to overall language development. The result is a motivating environment where students understand their progress and can envision practical applications for their developing skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

We introduced four EFL activities to help teachers create an engaging and enjoyable classroom atmosphere for their students. These activities are based on our own experiences over several years as EFL instructors in Japan and have been used by many other instructors all over the world. Given the current motivation levels of many students in East Asia, we believe it is highly beneficial for EFL teachers to apply insights gained from Kikuchi (2015) and other SLA researchers to guide them in creating and implementing similar classroom activities to the ones we introduced in this paper.

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## APPENDIX

### Mingling Worksheet

Instructions:

- Go around the class.
- Talk with everyone.
- Practice introductions.
- Ask some other questions too!

The goal is to have **conversations** in English.

Possible topics include hobbies and interests, university studies, travel, or study abroad.

#### Part 1

Make Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
6. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

#### Help with Questions

**Yes/No Questions:** Do you like \_\_\_? | Do you have \_\_\_? | Do you play \_\_\_?

Examples: *Do you like pizza? Do you have a pet? Do you play soccer?*

**What Questions:** What \_\_\_ do you like? | What do you eat? | What do you watch?

Examples: *What food do you like? What music do you listen to?*

**Where Questions:** Where do you \_\_\_? | Where do you go? | Where do you live?

Examples: *Where do you eat lunch? Where do you study?*

**When Questions:** When do you \_\_\_? | When do you wake up? | When do you sleep?

Examples: *When do you go to bed? When do you study English?*

**Part 2**

Fill in the Information.

Name(s)	Answers
	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.

**Part 3**

Write a short connected 3–5 sentence summary from your notes. After you have written the summary, you will share it with the class. For example,

I talked with John Smith. He is from Canada. John likes baseball. He watches baseball every weekend. John studied Japanese. He studied Japanese in Kyoto. John is very nice.

Summary

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# The Play's the Thing: Three Types of Plays to Build English Skills

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**Tory S. Thorkelson**

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“Play well, or play badly, but play truly.”  
– N. Konstantin Stanislavski (*ENC News*, 2025)

## INTRODUCTION

Drama can be a highly effective tool for language learning, offering numerous benefits for students (see Boudreault, 2010; Kawasaki, 2021). Davies (1990) included the following within drama: “mime, role-playing, extended role-playing (or improvisation), simulation, interaction activities such as various forms of dialogues, and dramatized story-telling” (p. 88).

Further, in defining the differences between “theater in education,” “drama in education,” and “educational drama,” Valverde (2003) makes the following distinctions: (a) TIE, or theater in education, is the name given to a particular kind of theater, practiced by professional drama companies, or TIE teams, which work specifically in educational projects to be devised at schools and (b) DIE, or drama in education, is the term applied to the practice and use of drama in the classroom, as both subject and method (see Thorkelson, 2022, p. 85). This report aims to show how three different types of plays can be used to develop students’ confidence and skills in a more systematic way through a purposeful drama in education (DIE) approach incorporating short plays rather than simply using the typical role plays or dialogues offered as part of a traditional textbook lesson in the language learning classroom.

## THREE TYPES OF PLAYS

### Radio Plays

While radio plays have not been extensively documented as a specific teaching method in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms, their usage likely emerged alongside the rise of radio itself, particularly during the Golden Age of Radio (late 1920s to early 1950s) when radio dramas were extremely popular (PBS, 2019, para. 9), offering a way to engage listeners with storytelling through audio alone. According to Davies (1990), drama or theatrical exercises include attention, listening, memorization, monitoring, communication, interpretation, and language games, all of

which help learners develop their word power and dexterity, fluency, and flexibility of English usage. Also, with recent advancements in information technology, a compelling case can be presented to revive radio drama as an extra-curricular practice or reintroduce it into English language programs in schools (Taib et al., 2022, p. 820).

Within the author's classroom context, using the same script worked better than having students modify classic radio plays or write their own scripts. As this is the first play type they encountered after half a semester of doing improvisation and monologues, the focus is on telling the story of the radio play using different voices, sound effects, and accents where necessary without memorizing the script. The plays are performed for their classmates, who were instructed to face away from the performers to reduce their shyness and help their classmates focus on the sounds and voices as they are used to perform the radio plays as well as the similarities and differences between performances, since they are using the same script.

## Puppet Plays

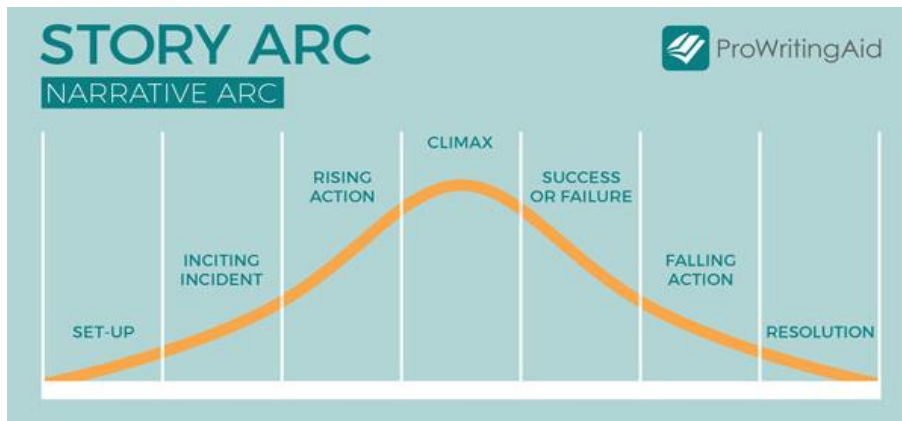
Puppets, with their unique physical characteristics, can both enhance the language learning experience and allow students to develop confidence in their language skills while distancing the students from their mistakes by placing the focus on the puppets rather than those controlling their actions. As Pantazopolous (2024) stated, "Their inherent ability to create a non-threatening and enjoyable atmosphere holds the key to mitigating anxiety, thereby making the language acquisition process a joyful expedition" (para. 4).

In terms of skills, puppets can seamlessly help students to use all four language skills while having them write their own scripts based on four set characters helps their "writing skills reach new heights as students are inspired to script puppet shows ... inspired by their puppet companions, fueling creativity and linguistic expression. Writing becomes a purposeful and enjoyable activity as students bring their ideas to life through the creation of scripts" (Pantazopolous, 2024, para. 12).

In this case, the students are given four puppets accompanied by very brief biographies and have to write their own 5-to-7-minute play. The puppets used are from the Melissa and Doug toy store, including a firefighter, policeman, female doctor, and cowgirl to balance genders and provide a good mix of jobs.

The author also covers the essentials of the story arc and storyboarding to give the students the basic tools to create seamless and exciting scenarios for their plays (see Masterclass, 2021). Or the story arc can be presented in visual form (see Figure 1).

Second, *storyboarding*, as another tool for helping the students to map out the play ideas before they write the script, is "the process of sketching the scenes/shots of a production before shooting to spot potential problems. Storyboarding can be used in theatre, animation, and writing" (Technology@Wooster, 2024, para. 1). For creating an original play script, see Zvonar (n.d., paras. 33–35) for a specific list of steps.

**FIGURE 1. Story Arc for Script Analysis**

Note. From StoryFit (<https://storyfit.com/story-arcs-script-analysis/>).

After a week or so of writing and rehearsing, the students perform their original puppet plays for their classmates using the puppets provided by the author along with any props, scenery, or sound effects they decided to use. In this case, memorization is encouraged but not required. Again, the students discuss how their plays were similar and different to learn from each other.

### Ten-Minute Plays

The purpose of using the ten-minute play as the final component of the acting class is to put all of the accumulated skills and experience that the students have built up during this class into a showcase of their talents and skills. While drama involves many skills and competencies, it should be communicative while allowing the students to make their own choices (Davies, 1990, p. 88). The process takes about a month and the steps are as follows:

#### Scene/Play Workshops/Performances

- Day 1:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 20 minutes, group exercise; 30 minutes, group preparation time.
- Day 2:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 20 minutes, group preparation and practice time. Finalize scripts.
- Day 3:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; 40 minutes, 1st run-throughs and comments.
- Day 4:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; 40 minutes, 2nd run-throughs and comments.
- Day 5:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; 40 minutes, 3rd run-throughs and comments.
- Day 6:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; 40 minutes, 4th run-throughs and comments. On stage if possible.
- Day 7:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; 40 minutes, for dress rehearsals.
- Day 8:** Warm Ups (Breathing and Voice); 10 minutes, preparation/practice time; Final play performances.

### **Scene Suggestions**

- Pick a scene that involves everyone fairly equally.
- Choose a captain/director/props people and so on within your team. Props/costumes should be simple and easy to find/make. They should help you and the audience set the scene.
- Memorize your lines as quickly as possible. No memory, no character.
- Give each other feedback and suggestions after each rehearsal.
- Be creative and experiment with body language/expressions/gestures.
- We are not looking for professional acting, but we are looking for effort. Laziness hurts your team as well as yourself and will ultimately hurt the team grade.
- You will be evaluated by your teacher, some invited judges, and your classmates. (40–40–20) for the scenes.
- Acting is hard work, but it is also very rewarding and fun. (Thorkelson, 2025, p. 168)

The entire process is guided and facilitated by the author but the onus is on the students to bring the play to life. This begins with choosing a script (or writing one) but most groups of students choose to modify an existing one. Next, they need to complete both a play analysis worksheet, including character sketches for each character, to show that they have researched the play and their character in order to understand its themes and cultural as well as linguistic aspects fairly well. In this case, drama offers a much better option for students to showcase what they have learned “based on a story. ... There are usually props, stage directions and different characters and speakers” (Twinkl, n.d., para. 17). It can be almost impossible to find a play where the acting roles are perfectly balanced, but the students can learn just as much about English language and culture by taking on the roles of director, props person, make-up artist, or costumer, so this is not a problem in most cases.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper is to take drama in the language classroom even further using three types of plays to help students build communicative confidence in spoken English but to also develop their knowledge of acting as a skillset to solve problems through developing their ability to act on instinct through improvisation, their ability to write in English through play scripts, and their knowledge of the target language culture among others.

In terms of the plays themselves, the radio play helps students to focus on using their voices and well-chosen sound effects to tell the story of the play without worrying about memorization or body language as a first step. By providing a common script, the similarities and differences of the teams’ performances also serve as a demonstration of the uniqueness of any number of live performances of the same play and are used as the basis of a class discussion after all the teams have performed.

The puppet plays start from a common set of four characters and use the story arc and storyboards to encourage groups to write and perform their own plays. Again, the focus is on the puppets’ physical characteristics and not the students themselves. Memorization is encouraged but not required and the use of props, simple sets or

backdrops along with sound effects are to be expected during these performances to bring their unique plots to life.

Finally, the ten-minute plays are the best way to put on a full, live performance of a short play with props, costumes, sound effects, and music for classes of 18 to 27 students. As this is also their final exam, these are graded, and the students are expected to memorize their lines and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of their character and the play they have chosen to perform. These may be original plays, adapted plays, or scripts taken from online or offline sources, but the expectations are the same. The students are expected to make good use of their time, both inside and outside of class, to prepare the best performances they can over the month-long preparation, rehearsal, and final performance process described previously.

Bringing all of the skills and knowledge of acting, as well as their increased confidence in communicating in English, together onstage is challenging but also rewarding. Over the span of all the classes taught in a similar way, the student evaluations of this class have ranged from the mid-80s to the high 90s, which shows the students' appreciation of the class and what it offers. It is the author's hope that this report will allow others to benefit from a similar approach in their language learning classrooms.

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# Bilingual Story Time: A Ten Step Guide for All Teachers

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Bilingual story time offers a promising, inclusive approach to early childhood education by supporting multilingual learners' language development, cultural identity, and motivation through content-integrated read-aloud sessions. This research report presents a practical ten-step guide for educators – regardless of language background – to implement bilingual story time in preschool and early elementary classrooms. Drawing from current literacy and language acquisition research, the guide emphasizes strategies such as curating multicultural book lists in multiple languages, leveraging technological resources, adapting to varying educator language proficiencies, and engaging children through songs, movement, visual aids, and interactive activities. These steps aim to foster vocabulary development, emotional expression, cross-cultural understanding, and active classroom participation. The report further demonstrates the adaptability of these practices for English language teaching in both U.S. and Korean contexts – responding to growing linguistic and cultural diversity, and highlighting their value in other Asian EFL settings. The integration of bilingual story time contributes not only to children's literacy, social skills, and emotional growth, but also supports monolingual educators in building inclusive classrooms where all students actively participate and take pride in their home languages. Overall, the guide provides actionable strategies that equip teachers to enrich the educational experience for all learners by making story time a vibrant, multilingual, and cross-curricular event.

**Keywords:** bilingual story time, teacher education, multilingual learners, ESL strategies, inclusive classrooms

## INTRODUCTION

Story time is a treasure within our preschool classrooms, as it can denote intangible rewards such as knowledge, imagination, emotional enrichment, and cultural heritage (Smith, 2020). Research shows that reading aloud to children is irreplaceable (Taylor et al., 2020). Teaching content while reading aloud is also effective (Campana et al., 2022; Joo et al., 2021; Luna, 2017). As teachers, we aim to teach cross-curricularly as often as possible.

To support our multilingual children's language development and motivate their learning, we implemented bilingual story time using themed picture books that focused on science and social studies topics. We selected books and implemented instructional routines to engage children as described below in these ten teaching tips.

Most educators in early childhood education in the United States speak only English, while the population of multilingual learners in their classrooms and libraries continues to grow. It can be difficult for educators to include young learners if they don't speak their language or languages. If you or your colleagues find yourselves in this situation, this article is for you.

This article presents three reflection questions for readers:

- What space in your classroom could be enhanced with bilingual and bicultural picture books?
- Where could you incorporate a new routine or revise an existing one to promote bilingual story time opportunities?
- How can you intentionally leverage your interactions with children to support bilingualism?

The following ten steps have been developed by the author and have proven effective through her research. These steps have also been shared with attendees at the 2023 TESOL Convention. By following these steps, educators can create inclusive environments that promote success for all students.

## BOOK SELECTION PROCESS

### Step 1: Compile a Diverse Book List with Content

Create a list of books about science in multiple languages, such as Arabic, English, French, Korean, and Spanish. Topics may include life cycles of caterpillars to butterflies, food as energy, and animal habitats, just to name a few. For example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, written and illustrated by Eric Carle (1994), can be found in Arabic and English. Titles like this are excellent multicultural and multilingual selections focused on science topics. In a multilingual context with Arabic and English speakers, this selection would address the linguistic landscape of the children. Recognizing the home languages of your students helps to enrich their learning experience.

The research on multilingual story time stresses the importance of getting to know your student population and identifying the languages they speak at home. Selecting a book that incorporates their language or background can make reading more engaging and culturally responsive. Many popular children's books are available in multiple languages. For example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* has been published in 65 languages. Be sure to also consider the age and developmental level of your students. This ensures the vocabulary you emphasize is suitable for developing their English skills.

If you have a diverse classroom, you may find multiple home languages. In that case, this study recommends picking certain days of the week to focus on each dominant language. The researcher also suggests simply choosing a word from the story and introducing it in multiple languages. To promote inclusivity and enhance your

students' learning, it's important to select books that connect with the diverse backgrounds of your multilingual learners.

## Step 2: Acquire Bilingual Reading Materials Through Technology

The second step is to gather the resources you need for story time. Start by checking your school and local public libraries, which often have diverse collections of multicultural books.

If you can't find the book you want, the author recommends exploring e-books and online resources accessible through your library or the internet. YouTube offers a vast selection of free videos to choose from.

- This YouTube channel, Read Aloud Books, offers more than 100 read-aloud videos that include animation and sound effects for a dynamic and engaging presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4QIRvGu70o9JVCp8KUncS6CVWjUdXeFR>
- You can create your own channel at *KEnglishReadAlouds*, which offers bilingual read-alouds in English and Korean. For instance, *Where's Halmoni?* written and illustrated by Julie Kim (2017): (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FeMKXJU6wQ&t=802s>)

Secure bilingual books or ebooks through online resources. Take advantage of your local library's cross-curricular collection. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries have added even more electronic resources for teachers and families to use with their children. For example, check out *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* written by Bill Martin, Jr. (1996) and illustrated by Eric Carle. This book has been translated into many languages and is available as a bilingual book for such languages as English and Spanish.

## Step 3: Adapt to Educator Language Proficiencies and Cultures

Decide how language will be used by either monolingual or bilingual educators. For instance, monolingual teachers, who might only speak English, can integrate important cross-curricular lessons. Topics may address students' heritage language and cultures such as English books that use Arabic words like Kareem (Arabic name) and Ramadan. For instance, check out *It's Ramadan, Curious George* written by H. A. Rey and Hena Khan (2016). Monolingual teachers unsure of pronunciations can use Google Translate or ask for help from a bilingual colleague or student. Multilingual educators have the flexibility to deliver the story predominantly in the students' primary languages while utilizing English to introduce academic terms or equivalent phrases where applicable.

Incorporating key vocabulary from the story into your students' home languages can enhance comprehension and engagement. If your story time is in English, identify essential words that are crucial for understanding and provide translations to help multilingual learners grasp the vocabulary.

If you encounter any difficulties with translations, some students can serve as language assistants, sharing their own translations or explaining concepts in their home languages, such as Korean. By valuing all languages in your classroom, you create a more inclusive environment for all learners.

## PRE-STORYTIME ACTIVITIES

### Step 4: Engage Students with Universal Songs

Begin your storytime sessions with recognizable songs to draw the students' attention and set a joyful tone. Melodies such as the timeless *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* is a fantastic choice that can resonate with children from various backgrounds. Play the melody without words and invite students to sing along in their home language. Connect the song to science concepts related to the solar system. *Happy Birthday to You* is also a good option, as everyone can sing along in their home language as well as in English. To connect to social studies content, address birthday celebrations.

To promote inclusivity and cultural pride, encourage students to sing in their home languages if they prefer. By singing along to these catchy tunes, students will create a sense of community and excitement as they prepare for the activities to come.

### Step 5: Start with Welcoming Movement Songs

Creating a warm, inviting atmosphere is essential for a successful multilingual storytime experience. A greeting song can break the ice, signaling that this activity will embrace elements of the students' languages and help ease the pressure of an English-only lesson.

Choose songs that offer a warm welcome and encourage physical activity. Opt for tunes that are easy to learn and can be sung in the children's home languages. An example might be the greeting song *Salam Alaikum Kaifa Alhal (Peace Be Upon You, How Are You?)* to make Arabic-speaking students feel included, which seamlessly blends cultural respect with gentle exercise. During the activity, position students around the classroom so they can sing the song with their neighbors and move freely as they engage. After reading, invite students to stand and sing, as it injects a sense of movement and joy into the learning process. Choose additional classics that the children are comfortable with, such as *The Wheels on the Bus*. Consider singing them in different languages represented in your classroom to honor linguistic diversity.

Encouraging students to use greetings in different languages piques the interest of English-speaking students and fosters a sense of inclusivity. There are many greeting songs available in multiple languages.

## Step 6: Assist Students in Expressing Emotions

Nonverbal communication is also an important part of the learning process, and incorporating facial expressions allows students to communicate more easily and openly. Using the ever-present emoji as a visual aid encourages students to share how they're feeling. For example, you might ask Spanish-speaking students "How are you today? ¿Cómo están hoy?" You can facilitate this by using a feeling chart for students to point at or by creating a feeling chart on the classroom board where they can place an emoji card that best describes their current feelings.

Support both dual language and multilingual learners in articulating their feelings by using large emoji charts or flashcards as visual references. Before diving into the story time, pre-teach new and critical vocabulary, such as the word *fish* in Korean. Encourage students to identify their emotions using visual aids and experiment with voice tone to convey different emotions. Reading bilingual editions of *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (1992) or *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney (2008) – picture books that explore friendships, courage, and love – can elicit emotion for students to exclaim.

## ACTIVITIES DURING STORY TIME

### Step 7: Use Relevant Props

Start the storytelling session by introducing manipulatives that connect to the book's theme. This tactile approach enhances comprehension of the story's elements. For instance, while reading *Selma's Dolls (The First Day of School)*, written by Valerie Alva-Ruiz and Courtney Stillwagon (2017) and illustrated by Katie Lim and Luis Schittone, present an Ameena Muslim doll wearing hijab. Additionally, introduce the names of colors in other languages represented in the classroom with puzzles (i.e., Spanish color matching) or Arabic alphabet blocks.

Using objects related to the story, commonly known as "realia," can significantly enhance students' engagement and understanding of key vocabulary. Present each item along with its name in both English and your students' home languages. For example, if you select *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, use various foods mentioned in the story, like strawberries or apples, to reinforce comprehension.

Once students understand the words in their home languages and in English, encourage them to pass the objects around the classroom while you read. The children will love this interactive experience.

### Step 8: Foster Proactive Learning

Creating a dynamic learning environment during story time hinges on being proactive and interactive with your students. Multilingual learners are invaluable resources when it comes to their home languages, and their insights can greatly enrich

the storytelling experience. Encourage them to contribute by sharing words or phrases in their native languages, especially if you forget a word or are unsure about a translation.

Maintain an interactive environment throughout the story time. Invite dual language and multilingual learners to share their linguistic skills, assisting peers and educators with new vocabulary. Also, monolingual teachers may use tools like online bilingual dictionaries to enhance communication. The goal is to create a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere that supports language learning and student participation. For example, one bilingual student can help the monolingual teacher as a teaching assistant. Also, bilingual students could actively join the story time by answering the questions during reading such books as *Comiendo el Arcoiris – Eating the Rainbow*, a bilingual Spanish/English book by Patricia Barrera Boyer (2020). Similarly, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin & Archambault, 1989) in English and Arabic can be introduced by a bilingual teacher or student. It can be extended to *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* in English and Korean versions.

To facilitate this interaction, consider asking targeted questions that encourage participation, such as “Who can share how to say ‘friend’ in their language?” or “Does anyone have a special greeting from their culture?” This technique cultivates a spirit of collaboration, making students feel acknowledged and connected. Not only will you promote stronger engagement but also empower students by validating their language skills and cultural backgrounds.

## POST-STORYTIME ACTIVITIES

### Step 9: Reinforce Vocabulary Across Languages

After story time, introduce a quick song, perhaps the same one used at the beginning of the lesson. With students still active and engaged, this is the perfect time to reinforce key vocabulary from the reading. This study suggests using vocabulary cards, where students can ask for the word in their home language, and you can ask for the corresponding word in English.

Engage children in a post-reading activity to reinforce vocabulary or letter learning from a picture book. For instance, after reading aloud the picture book, *Baby Bear, Baby Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. (2010), hand out cards with animal illustrations. Dual language or multilingual students may identify each animal in English or other languages. Similarly, bilingual teachers or peers may provide the translations. Reinforce bi-directional learning by having the children teach the teacher the English words in their home language, especially if it is a monolingual teacher who may speak only Korean in a Korean educational context.

Additionally, consider playing games like hot potato to make vocabulary practice fun. When the music stops, the student holding the potato must correctly recall a new word learned during the lesson to stay in the game. This interactive approach not only solidifies their understanding but also keeps the excitement alive.

## Step 10: Conclude with a Personalized Activity

End the story time with a meaningful activity that leaves a lasting impression. Finishing the lesson with a reflective component is important for your students to showcase what they've learned. A game, short quiz, or a reward can reinforce the lesson content while encouraging students to think about learning experiences. For a personalized touch, bestow upon each student their name written in two languages such as English and Arabic as a gift. This thoughtful gesture not only shows appreciation but also celebrates cultural identity and gives children a tangible connection to the written form of their name across different languages.

A picture book to pair with such an activity is *The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story* written by Aya Khalil (2020) and illustrated by Anait Semirdzhyan. In this English-version picture book, classroom examples of children's names are written in Arabic and Japanese.

## APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The ten steps of bilingual story time developed for the U.S. ELT context can be thoughtfully adapted and applied to the Korean ELT context in various ways. For instance, in Korea, many teachers share the same first language (L1), Korean, with their young learners. However, there is also a growing number of classrooms where teachers and students do not share an L1 due to increasing linguistic and cultural diversity. These bilingual storytime strategies are therefore relevant in both settings: for supporting Korean–English bilingualism among native Korean speakers and for addressing the needs of multilingual and multicultural student populations, including those from China, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

Several specific examples of how these strategies can be implemented in Korean ELT classrooms have been provided. These examples illustrate the applicability and flexibility of bilingual story time in enhancing language learning, fostering cultural pride, and promoting inclusivity. Furthermore, the approaches discussed are not limited to Korea; they can be extended to other ELT contexts across Asia, where similar linguistic and cultural dynamics are present. This highlights the broader relevance and potential impact of integrating bilingual storytime practices within diverse educational settings throughout the region.

## CONCLUSION

Story time in early childhood education plays a crucial role in fostering literacy development, social skills, and emotional growth among young children. Research has shown that engaging children in storytime activities enhances their language skills, promotes a love for reading, and supports their cognitive and social-emotional development. The incorporation of various storytelling techniques and interactive

elements during story time can significantly contribute to children's literacy development and engagement in a vibrant and inclusive learning environment.

We hope these tips are valuable for enhancing your classroom experience. By following these steps, you'll empower your multilingual learners to participate more actively in story time and other class activities. Rather than feeling sidelined, these students will take a leading role in sharing words in their home languages, which helps to build their confidence as they learn English.

These techniques benefit not only multilingual learners but support teachers – both monolingual and bilingual – in working effectively with English learners. By implementing bilingual story time, you as educators create opportunities for all students to embrace new languages and cultural perspectives, ultimately enriching the learning environment for everyone. As noted by one guest bilingual teacher, such practices help to “create more safe and friendly environments and promotes interactions and students' engagement” (personal communication, 2022).

## THE AUTHOR

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## READER RESOURCES

Tap into these resources to learn more about encouraging teachers to read aloud bilingual story time with young children.

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## **Book Reviews**

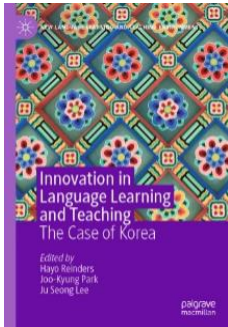
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## Review of *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching: The Case of Korea*

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Hayo Reinders, Joo-Kyung Park, Ju Seong Lee (Editors)  
Palgrave Macmillan (2025)  
Pages: xii + 346. (ISBN: 978-3-031-83561-2, Hardcover)

**Reviewed by Tory S. Thorkelson**

### INTRODUCTION

For those of us who have lived and worked in Korea for a while, previous publications like *The KOTESOL Handbook: Teaching English in Korea* (1999) and the similarly titled *Teaching English to Koreans* (2003) come to mind as must-read volumes for anyone interested in teaching in Korea. They are also a good set of references for any educator who has been teaching here for more than a year or two. Therefore, I was eager to see what this collection had to offer.

### SUMMARY

This edited volume is a timely and refreshing look at English language teaching (ELT) innovations in Korea, a context where decades of top-down educational reforms have struggled to meet expectations. Rather than repeating the familiar narrative of centralized failures, the book turns to what is working: the remarkable grassroots transformations emerging from teachers, researchers, and institutions at all levels of education. It demonstrates that meaningful change in Korean ELT is not mandated from above but is created from within classrooms and professional communities.

## CONTENT

The collection is diverse in scope. Early chapters explore novel approaches in elementary and secondary English education, including Hae-Ri Kim's comprehensive overview of English literacy practices and Sangmin-Michelle Lee and Junseong Bang's introduction of artificial intelligence digital textbooks (AIDTs) – an AI-enhanced personalized learning model designed to elevate public education through individualized learning experiences. Their chapter clearly explains the architecture and pedagogical implications of AIDT, ultimately arguing that its success will depend on a synergy between technological innovations and the active engagement of both teachers and students. However, these AIDTs were introduced with great anticipation and quickly withdrawn from general usage. From technical issues to a lack of hands-on training for students and teachers alike, these books were quickly moved from the centerpiece of the curriculum to purely supplementary material after only one semester of use (Kwon, 2025). Particularly compelling is the argument that AI-driven personalization can enhance learning outcomes and reduce achievement gaps – provided that technological advancement remains paired with thoughtful engagement from teachers and learners. Contributions focusing on informal digital learning and AI-mediated skill development further highlight the growing complexity of learners' digital ecosystems. Still, their rapid adoption and removal also highlight the challenges of making less traditional textbooks the mainstay of the K–12 classroom without careful consideration and preparation.

Continuing in the secondary education context, Joohyun Bae examines informal digital learning of English (IDLE) and its relationship with learners' willingness to communicate in English. Using survey data from 206 students, she demonstrates that positive perceptions of English as an international language partially mediate this relationship, highlighting the role of informal digital engagement in shaping communicative confidence.

Rakhun Kim's contribution expands on the role of AI by presenting two case studies that illustrate how generative AI can enhance both receptive and productive English skills among Korean high school learners. His findings advocate for an integrative approach wherein AI tools and human teachers work in tandem to support complex language development.

The volume then transitions to teacher education, focusing on a unique case of in-service professional development. Eun-kyoung Jang, Ahn S.-H. Gyemyong, and Mun Woo Lee introduce *Snowball*, a one-year long-term English (LTE) program grounded in long-term engagement, peer learning, and ongoing feedback. The authors identify the program's success factors and candidly discuss challenges and lessons learned, offering valuable insights for future LTE designs.

The chapters addressing higher education showcase a rich diversity of pedagogical experimentation. Jocelyn Wright describes the design and implementation of two English for peacebuilding purposes courses that encourage students to develop both intrapersonal and interpersonal understandings of peace through process writing. Young-Mee Suh and Seonmin Huh make the case for

context-sensitive critical literacy instruction, advocating for localized adaptations that balance linguistic, cognitive, and affective learner development.

Eun Gyong Kim highlights the promising adoption of integrating content and language in higher education (ICLHE) in a Korean science and engineering university, reporting high satisfaction among students and faculty while identifying areas for refinement. Eunjou Oh presents an interdisciplinary global citizenship-oriented English course built through backward design and scaffolded through technology and collaboration, with evidence of enhanced English proficiency and learner self-efficacy.

Further advancing student-centered pedagogy, Mi Kyong Kim proposes project-based language learning (PBLL) with an added critical dimension supported by AI-based tools. Her case study shows how inquiry-driven projects can foster reflective and critical thinking while tailoring support to learner proficiency. Hye-Kyung Kim and Sumi Han investigate flipped learning from a big-data perspective, offering bibliometric and keyword analyses that illuminate emerging trends within Korean EFL settings.

The penultimate chapter by Jihyeon Jeon and Eun-young Kwon calls attention to the under-acknowledged field of English for specific purposes (ESP) in Korea, emphasizing that its learner needs-based approach offers strong potential for personalization – an issue central to current ELT discourse.

The concluding chapter synthesizes key lessons and offers practical recommendations for the continued advancement of the field. Readers interested in educational reform, language pedagogy, or the Korean educational context will find this volume especially valuable. Above all, it provides convincing evidence that innovation in ELT is alive and accelerating in Korea – not because it has been imposed but because teachers and learners are driving it.

## **EVALUATION**

Taken as a whole, the volume is both informative and forward-looking. Its greatest strength lies in its insistence that innovation is not a monolithic concept but a collection of context-sensitive practices shaped by unique learner needs, institutional goals, and professional identities. While the chapters vary in methodology and focus, the collection maintains a coherent message: The future of ELT in Korea will depend less on sweeping governmental reforms and more on empowering educators, embracing technology critically, and fostering learner-centered pedagogy.

Thus, the book will be a rich resource for researchers, students, teachers, and administrators interested in understanding, implementing, or evaluating innovation in language teaching environments globally. I would also add it to the list of books that anyone interested in living and working in Korea as an English teacher, instructor, or professor should read before entering the Korean educational environment, short or long term, to truly understand the challenges and potential benefits of such a career move.

## THE REVIEWER

**Tory S. Thorkelson** (BA, bed, med in TESL/TEFL, phd in language studies/curriculum development) is a proud Canadian who has been an active KOTESOL member since 1998 and has presented at many local and international conferences. He is a past president of the KOTESOL Seoul Chapter, a past president of KOTESOL, and a former KOTESOL Teacher Training leader and member. Dr. Thorkelson was an associate professor for HYU's English Language and Literature Program for almost 20 years and is now a visiting professor at Sejong University. He has co-authored research studies and textbooks, written several book reviews, papers, and a few ebooks, and he has been a regular contributor to *EFL Magazine*. Email: koreathorkelson@gmail.com

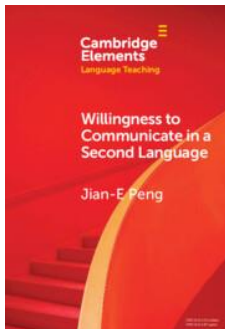
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## Review of *Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language*

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By Jian-E Peng  
Cambridge University Press (2025).  
Pages: 68. (ISBN 978-1-009-41786-0, Paperback)

**Reviewed by Jake Kimball**

### INTRODUCTION

Have you heard that all-too-common refrain among EFL teachers? It goes like this: *They just won't talk*. This common classroom challenge appears across most educational contexts and even learner age groups. What is a teacher to do? Teachers respond in varied ways, drawing on their experience, creativity, and patience. But before pedagogical solutions can be meaningfully implemented, it is essential to examine why our learners may be unwilling to participate in the first place. This is a central question at the heart of research on willingness to communicate (WTC) in a second language.

### SUMMARY

Willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to learners' readiness to engage in second-language communication (i.e., CLT). It is a multi-faceted concept. While it is simple to account for low levels of WTC as a lack of language proficiency, it is more nuanced. It is shaped by the interaction of individual, social, and contextual factors. For individual factors, that might comprise anxiety, beliefs, motivation, and agency. Social factors might include culture or rapport with teachers and classmates. Contextual factors may encompass activity types, content familiarity or personal interest, classroom climate, and other teacher practices.

This book is a resource for readers interested in classroom dynamics, participation, motivation, and classroom practices. It is especially relevant to teachers in Asian contexts such as Korea, China, and Japan. Graduate students would find this especially helpful, given the studies illustrated and their findings. In general, this book will be particularly relevant to scholars as well as experienced language teachers interested in understanding their learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in and out of the classroom and online in digital contexts.

## CONTENTS

Within the span of 68 pages, the author, Jian-E Peng, outlines twenty-five years of research concerning willingness to communicate (WTC), neatly divided into seven chapters, including a two-page Introduction. Each chapter is devoted to one WTC research consideration, ranging from theoretical foundations to practical interventions.

In Chapter 1, the Introduction, origins and terms are defined, with brief introductions to influential research studies illustrating various WTC perspectives. This is followed by a map of contents showcasing what is to follow.

Chapter 2, WTC in an L2: Seminal and Novel Conceptualizations, offers an extended review of WTC as a concept, starting with L1 origins and then moving on to WTC in L2 contexts. Research shows that they are quite different. There are two significant figures reproduced, one from MacIntyre's pyramid model (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547) and an updated 3D model (Henry & MacIntyre, 2024, p. 262). These two graphics visually acquaint readers with the complexity of WTC.

WTC is a complex area for research. Chapter 3, Various Perspectives on Researching WTC, provides a chronological tour of WTC from different perspectives. Six key areas are spotlighted: social psychological, cultural, dynamic, ecological, multimodal, and digital. Each approach is supported by brief reports and findings from key research studies.

Key Factors Associated with WTC, Chapter 4, tackles WTC in relation to SLA. More precisely, psychological, social, and linguistic influences are addressed. These can be internal or external to learners. (Thornbury [2017] refers to these as trait and state variables). Again, each factor is underpinned by a considerable number of studies where the author highlights their strengths and weaknesses.

How then is one to begin researching their own context? Certainly, Chapters 1–4 more than hint at the complexity of WTC as a construct. Chapter 5's Methodological Approaches in WTC Research, saves the day. In fact, quantitative and qualitative methods get the lion's share of *Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language*. It is 15 pages long. First, past studies that fit squarely into quantitative and qualitative frameworks are discussed. Then, the idiodynamic method is illustrated. This is a four-step process grounded in Larsen-Freeman and Cameron's (2008) complex dynamic systems theory (CDST). These research approaches are bookended by three cutting-edge studies. Each is organized by Participants, Data Collection and Analysis, and Findings.

Chapter 6 turns to more practical matters, with Implications for Enhancing L2 Learners' WTC. Various CLT strategies are noted. First, task types, especially personalized and authentic ones that resonate with learners. Next, classroom dynamics. Then there is also the idea of microlevel teaching practices. Finally, WTC is considered outside the confines of the classroom and in computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Chapter 7 concludes *Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language* with a look at Future Directions for WTC Research. WTC is an area that deserves more attention, as past studies are not the final word on the topic. Peng presents ideas for improving or following up on past research. Future research is expected to pay dividends in advancing understanding of L2 WTC in different communicative contexts.

## EVALUATION

*Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language*, part of Cambridge's Elements in Language Teaching series, is a welcome addition to ELT research literature. It is short. Cambridge has designated it as an Open Access document. And it is available online at this time of publication.

Readers are likely to build a solid WTC foundation in a very short time. As mentioned earlier, class participation is a notorious phenomenon in our classrooms. As such, we could all use more background information about its complexities and subtleties. More knowledge, from theory to practice, would be a win-win for teachers and learners.

Most impressive is the sheer number of references. It is well documented, with brief commentary about each one. Anyone doing a literature review for their own WTC projects would greatly benefit by reading this overview. However, it would be helpful to have a background in quantitative and qualitative research terminology. While it is not a barrier to understanding WTC concepts, it would make it easier to read and digest through a research lens. Throughout each chapter, when studies are referenced, they are hyperlinked to the References section, making it much easier to navigate the text. And many references utilize helpful DOIs.

The second point that stands out is that noted research studies come from a wide variety of contexts and geographic locations. Of course, the author, Jian-E Peng, works in a China-based context, so there are undoubtedly numerous references to studies conducted in China. These are relevant to instructors here in Korea, though. However, additional studies conducted in other countries routinely appear throughout the book.

On the other hand, no book is without shortcomings. Books in the Cambridge Elements are relatively short. In essence, they are broad topics treated as deep literature reviews. As such, they are not full-length treatments of a given issue. Therefore, it is incumbent on the reader to follow up on individual references. This holds true for *Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language*, too. Moreover, Peng does not include any WTC instruments; however, following up on individual

references may lead to articles with useful surveys and questionnaires.

Finally, a word about demotivation. This word is noticeably absent. I think demotivation deserves discussion because, while our students' on-task behavior is influenced by positive forces, it is also influenced by negative ones. There is a body of research concerning demotivation that may be applicable to WTC.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, *Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language* is worth the time and effort to read. A lot of complex information is condensed into only 68 pages, and it can be read in one sitting. It includes both theory and practical strategies to implement in the classroom through trial and error.

## THE REVIEWER

**Jake Kimball** holds an MSc in educational management in TESOL from Aston University, and his research interests include classroom dynamics and willingness to communicate. Taking part in teacher development activities has been a long-time interest, and he enjoys journaling to maintain a reflective mindset. He is an assistant professor of English in the Liberal Arts Department of Semyung University. Email: ilejake@gmail.com

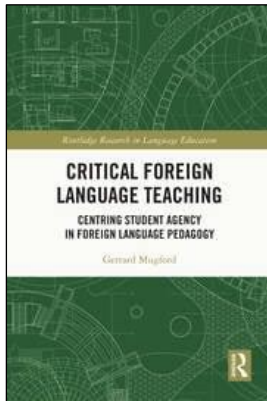
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## Review of *Critical Foreign Language Teaching: Centering Student Agency in Foreign Language Pedagogy*

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By Gerrard Mugford  
New York: Routledge (2025).  
Pages: viii + 185. (ISBN: 978-1-003613-78-7, Paperback)

**Reviewed by Sumood Almaowashi**

### INTRODUCTION

*Critical Foreign Language Teaching* explores a different pedagogy in the foreign language (FL) classroom. It aims to grant learners agency by arming them with the capability to carry out target language (TL) communication without losing their own voice. The significance of this book lies in the heated debate over freedom of speech and the expression of one's own mind. Gerrard Mugford's main argument in this book centers on empowering students to have a voice by treating them as agents rather than merely passive recipients of information. While most language classes take place in overwhelmingly positive, uplifting settings, addressing uncomfortable situations is often left out. The author addresses this gap by proposing a critical foreign language pedagogy (CFLP).

### SUMMARY

Using critical foreign language pedagogy (CFLP), Mugford aims to promote students' attentiveness, increase their stance awareness, and give students the option to position themselves. This means helping them decide for themselves how they want to proceed in communicative interactions, whether they want to conform, resist, or be neutral. Empowering students to speak their minds and express themselves in a

foreign language (FL), rather than repeating memorized utterances (which makes them sound less authentic in FL interactions), is a core idea in this book. It is about helping students be seen and recognized as individuals. Mugford's argument extends beyond the classroom, too, by equipping students with the ability to choose how they want to respond and interact in discourse outside the classroom, regardless of their language level. He highlights the negligence of the personal dimension in learning in FL classrooms. Thus, the author calls for enabling students to develop their own critical literacy, allowing them to assess and evaluate communicative encounters. The student would then feel free to choose how they want to respond, as not responding might be an option they prefer in some instances.

In addition to agency, voice, and critical literacy, other keywords in this book are choice, possibilities, and the use of existing knowledge from the first language (L1). The book transitions smoothly from one concept to another by showing teachers how to empower students to choose how they want to proceed in a conversation and which possibilities are available to support them in FL communication. To perform such an evaluation and make their choice, the author argues that students should be encouraged to utilize their L1 knowledge. Pre-existing knowledge and preconceptions are highlighted as strengths rather than weaknesses in an FL interaction. Students do not enter the class with zero knowledge; they bring their own culture and preconceptions derived from their L1, which enrich their critical approach in the FL classroom. Therefore, existing knowledge and experiences are viewed as a supportive feature rather than a hindrance. They are directly related to the personal dimension that is often overlooked and ignored in FL teaching classrooms.

## **CONTENTS**

The book's layout enables readers to smoothly delve into its content through clear language and precise examples. The book is divided into six chapters, each given equal weight. The author begins by laying out his main argument and the reasons this book is relevant to FL teaching literature. Then he moves to identify the three pillars of a critical pedagogy of FL: first, attentiveness; second, stance awareness and reflection; and finally, stance-taking and action-taking.

Following the Introduction, he dedicates a chapter to each of these pillars. Where the book describes the characteristics of the pillar, it provides real-life examples from FL students. The book then discusses the critical relational assets that students need to achieve their goals. Foreign language teachers should focus on these assets to enable students to maintain them. Then, the book covers the interactive aspect of language learning by explaining how CFLP prepares learners to engage actively with the language, rather than decontextualizing meaning and rehearsing grammatical items.

Chapter 1, Introduction, addresses the weaknesses of existing approaches to FL teaching, which rely heavily on having students practice predetermined utterances and rehearse grammatical structures. Alternatively, he offers a critical literacy

approach, which would give learners the ability to reflect and make choices. CFLP links learners inside the classroom to the broader social context in which they face challenges and obstacles, and they have the option and freedom to respond the way they want to in the TL. The Introduction also offers a brief description of CFLP, confirming that CFLP does not aim to replace current methodologies and practices in the FL classroom. Instead, CFLP can work in collaboration with existing pedagogies to enrich the learning experience of FL learners. After highlighting the main challenges of existing practices in the FL classroom, the book justifies its relevance and how it can help to “create a pedagogy of possibility” (p. 22). The latter portion of Chapter 1 describes the book’s layout, first with a brief overview of each chapter, then a brief conclusion.

Chapter 2, *Threads*, frames the first pillar of the CFLP’s three pillars: active intellectual involvement or attentiveness. To implement CFLP in the FL classroom, students need to be exposed to the TL, pay attention to details, practice recognition, and read the room through careful observation and recognition of verbal and nonverbal language. As they observe and document various interactions, critical pedagogy helps learners “reach a workable situation” (p. 34). Key points are provided to teachers on how to help students develop their illustration skills.

Chapter 3, *Awareness*, outlines the process of reflection and stance awareness. Three main points are discussed in this chapter to illustrate the second pillar of CFLP: finding voice, exploiting L1 preconceptions of existing knowledge, and evaluation and reflective processes. This chapter is particularly significant in highlighting the importance of personalizing TL usage and developing a voice to express one’s own thoughts. Additionally, the focus on integrating experiences and knowledge from L1 to the TL is discussed. Chapter 3 concludes with the importance of encouraging learners to practice reflection and evaluate others’ performances by examining evidence from language interaction.

Chapter 4, *Engagement*, is a natural continuation of the achievement and completion of critical foreign language pedagogy. The third pillar of CFLP portrays a meaningful engagement with the TL by establishing a precise positioning and acting accordingly. Several real-life examples that have challenging encounters in the TL are used to illustrate different points. These examples are followed by specific implications of what CFLP can achieve inside the classroom to address these TL challenges. Enacting voice and language ownership are emerging concepts in this chapter; where having choices is not enough, they enable learners to “achieve an impact and purpose with these choices” (p. 90). One of the examples regarding language ownership and purposeful choices is depicted by an FL speaker who insists on pronouncing his original country’s name as “Meh-Jee-coh” instead of “Mexico” (p. 94). Chapter 4 elaborates on the terminology of choice and possibility, describing various types of responses that FL learners can project, depending on the choices they make in problematic situations, such as choosing avoidance and a submissive stance versus an assertive or confrontational attitude during challenging or hostile interactions.

Chapter 5, *Critical Relational Assets*, shifts to a deeper aspect of CFLP: empowering learners to develop relational assets. Learners can utilize these assets to

establish, develop, and sometimes terminate relationships. The first step is to develop pragmatic processing and build confidence. The second step is to utilize knowledge from L1, which would enrich learners' assets in TL usage. The chapter highlights the traditional PPP approach (presentation, production, practice). It sets CFLP in contrast to it, as this pedagogy aims to develop interpersonal and social assets, providing the means to face TL challenges and obstacles.

Chapter 6, *Interaction-Driven Critical Pedagogy*, argues that critical foreign language pedagogy prepares learners to become active agents who actively participate in the TL context instead of being passive recipients of "an inventory of grammatical items, and lists of decontextualized vocabulary" (p. 144). Learners' choices and decision-making come from the interaction itself. It is within the scope of interaction where FL learners navigate possibilities and determine preferred action. This chapter begins by defining the goals of CFLP and by explaining how it resists adherence to the standardized rules, dominant norms, and practices defined by "inner circle" countries. This term refers to the dominant English-speaking countries, such as the USA and the UK. The argument then shifts to discuss how CFLP principles can be applied and implemented beyond the classroom setting into a wider society. First, teachers must address the emotional stress students experience in FL classes. These emotions range from lack of motivation to self-confidence and anxiety. When students overcome their emotional challenges, they will confidently explore the possibilities available to them. The chapter and the book conclude by addressing realities and limitations.

## **EVALUATION**

It is worth noting that this book not only bases its arguments on a firm theoretical grounding, but more importantly, it offers practical recommendations to FL teachers when discussing the pedagogy and approach it presents to FL language teaching. Throughout the book, FL teachers will find practical suggestions that make themes applicable in their foreign language classrooms. I recommend this book to any foreign language teacher. Even though it uses examples from teaching English as a foreign language, the book's themes apply to any language in any FL class. It is especially significant for adult learner environments, as it covers advanced critical literacy, where students use higher-order thinking skills through analysis and evaluation.

## **THE REVIEWER**

**Sumood Almaowashi** is a Fulbright alumna. She received her PhD in educational leadership from Clemson University. Her work focuses on international students, and her PhD research examined that group of students through the lens of social capital theory. She continues to explore ways to improve foreign language classes and empower students to use language confidently. Email: [sumood.clemson@gmail.com](mailto:sumood.clemson@gmail.com)

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# **Appendix**

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# Korea TESOL Journal

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## 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.
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- 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. A statement confirming this should accompany submissions.

Manuscripts should follow APA Style guidelines (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.), especially for in-text citations, reference items, tables, and figures. Submissions should be made with tables, figures, and other graphics included in the manuscript text (and upon request, as separate files). Graphic text must also follow APA style. All figures should be created in black and white, and graphs (pie graphs, bar graphs, etc.) 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 and publishes in a digital format.

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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