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Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen
Department of English Studies



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Contents

PREFACE.....	5
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AI-SUPPORTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND DIGITAL LITERACY: A THAI UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY <i>Atipat Boonmoh</i>	8
TPACK LEVEL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AMONG NOVICE AND EXPERIENCED EFL UNIVERSITY TEACHERS: INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIA <i>Berlinda Mandasari, Tommy Hastomo, Bambang Yudi Cahyono, Yazid Basthomi, Utami Widiati</i>	29
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF GAMES AND VIDEOS ON ESL LEARNING IN JORDANIAN UNIVERSITIES <i>Samia A. Abu El-Haj, Hala Abu El Haj, Hala Mohammad Hashem Al-Khalidi</i>	50
AN ANALYSIS OF NEGOTIATION SEQUENCES IN A HIGHER EDUCATION EFL CONTEXT <i>Fatma Şeyma Koç, Simla Course</i>	67
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED BANGLADESHI UNIVERSITIES <i>Rakib Al Hasan, Md. Jony Miah</i>	88
SUBTITLING IN THE CONTEXT OF TECHNOLOGY: TRANSLATING CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN <i>THE SIMPSONS</i> SERIES INTO ARABIC <i>Daiana Abdulsamad, Raed Al-Ramahi, Mohammad AlQudah</i>	113

NATURAL VS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND
NEURAL MACHINE TRANSLATION IN SPECIALISED
TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Irina Stoyanova-Georgieva..... 135

REVISITING JOHN DONNE’S METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE IN
“MEDITATION 17”: A HERMENEUTIC READING

Kuğu Tekin, *Zeynep Rana Turgut*..... 149

FROM MARKERS TO MOVES: A PARADIGM SHIFT
IN UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONAL METADISCOURSE
ACROSS CULTURES AND DISCIPLINES

Ghada Ali AlGhamdi..... 162

PREFACE

The third issue of volume 13 of *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT* for 2025 includes articles related to three main fields: FLT, translation studies, literature and metadiscourse studies.

Five of the papers discuss various aspects of the processes of teaching or learning English as a foreign language.

The study “Students’ perceptions of AI-supported language learning and digital literacy: A Thai university case study” by Atipat Boonmoh uses mixed methods to analyse the responses of 79 students from a Thai university to the integration of AI-driven tools in their English learning. The tools tested were ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit and the analysis of the conducted semi-structured interviews and student artefacts shows that using these contemporary tools students felt more confident in their learning. In addition, it became evident that such tools, especially when combined with interest-based tasks proved beneficial to low-proficiency users.

A group of Indonesian authors, i.e. Berlinda Mandasari, Tommy Hastomo, Bambang Yudi Cahyono, Yazid Basthomi, Utami Widiati make their contribution to the topic, however, this time analysing the integration of technology on behalf of English language teachers. In their paper “TPACK Level and Professional Development Strategies among Novice and Experienced EFL University Teachers: Insights from Indonesia” they use combined questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to analyse university teachers’ opinions on the integration of technology in their teaching and comment on the similarities and differences observed when comparing data from novice and experienced lecturers. The conclusion the scholars reach is that what should be provided by universities is differentiated professional development for novice lecturers and innovation-oriented training for experienced ones.

The focus of Samia A. Abu El-Haj, Hala Abu El Haj, and Hala Mohammad Hashem Al-Khalidi in “Assessing the impact of games and videos on ESL learning in Jordanian universities” is again on innovative teaching methods. The findings of the study show that although such innovative approaches to teaching reduce the tension they do not always lead to better performance, therefore a balance between traditional and innovative methods is suggested in order to report better student engagement paired with higher achievement.

Fatma Şeyma Koç and Simla Course provide the Turkish perspective in the stimuli English language learners can be provided with in order to achieve more. In “An analysis of negotiation sequences in a higher education EFL context” the scholars adopt a descriptive approach and study the negotiation sequences of 77 undergraduate English students. The researchers find that the interactions

fostered a calm learning environment and assisted learners in showing more confidence in their ability to communicate in English.

The last paper in the section on FLT is again with focus on the use of technology, this time in Bangladesh. Rakib Al Hasan and Md. Jony Miah's findings in "Problems and prospects of technology-assisted language learning among undergraduate students in selected Bangladeshi universities" come as a result of a semi-structured survey among 100 undergraduate students from public and private universities in Bangladesh. This study shows again a preference on behalf of students to new technologies and technology-assisted language learning and despite some challenges they gladly resort to such innovative methods of learning even on their own.

The two papers on translation focus on two different aspects. Daiana Abdulsamad, Raed Al-Ramahi and Mohammad AlQudah analyse the way cultural elements in subtitles of *The Simpson Series* have been translated into Arabic. The findings presented in "Subtitling in the Context of Technology: Translating Cultural Elements in *The Simpsons Series* into Arabic" reveal that subtitling strategies, including transfer, expansion, dislocation, deletion, and imitation, have been extensively and effectively employed in conveying culture-bound terms to Arabic-speaking audiences as they managed to convey the analysed terms in such a way that they did not interfere with Islamic cultural norms and traditions.

The second paper on translation "Natural vs artificial intelligence and neural machine translation in specialised translation: A comparative study" by Irina Stoyanova-Georgieva focuses on the differences between human and hybrid translation based on a number of translation projects conducted with BA students in a Bulgarian university. The findings suggest that even with the help of technology translators who lack experience might produce unacceptable translations. It has also been proven that factors that influence quality in translation are the translator's fluency in the target language and understanding of the subject matter.

Kuğu Tekin and Zeynep Rana Turgut in "Revisiting John Donne's metaphorical language in 'Meditation 17': A hermeneutic reading" draw the readers' attention to the never-ending appeal John Donne's metaphors have even today. As the two authors conclude "Donne's multi-layered metaphors moving from the individual to the communal and conveying the universal themes of life and death and the shared human experience surpass temporal and cultural boundaries".

The issue finishes with a paper on metadiscourse which provides a more theoretical approach to the topic. In "From markers to moves: A paradigm shift in understanding interactional metadiscourse across cultures and disciplines", Ghada Ali AlGhamdi provides an overview of the marker and move approaches

in metadiscourse studies and thus contributes to an aspect of metadiscourse which is under researched. On the basis of 90 research articles, the author develops a taxonomy of metadiscursive functions through a critical synthesis of existing MD taxonomies and theoretical frameworks, shifting the focus from surface markers to rhetorical moves. The findings have implications for EAP/ESP instruction, especially in cross-cultural and disciplinary contexts.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AI-SUPPORTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND DIGITAL LITERACY: A THAI UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *The integration of AI-driven tools in education is transforming language acquisition and digital citizenship. This study explores students' perceptions of how such tools support their English learning and ethical digital behaviour. For low-proficiency learners, these tools offer a pathway to develop essential 21st-century skills. This study presents a Thai university case study using an AI-supported, hobby-based learning model to enhance English language proficiency, digital literacy, and ethical online behaviour. Tools such as ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit were used in structured tasks, including discussion forums and video tutorials. A mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data from 79 students were analysed to assess their perceived improvements in writing, speaking, tool use, and ethical awareness. Qualitative data from six semi-structured interviews and student artefacts (Reddit posts and video tutorials) provided illustrative insights into learning experiences and self-reported confidence building. The findings suggest growth, rather than measured gains, in writing fluency, speaking clarity, and multimodal communication. Students reported improved confidence in using AI tools and demonstrated better understanding of privacy, copyright, and responsible tool use. As a case study of one university course, the findings reflect student perceptions within this limited context. The study highlights how carefully scaffolded AI-supported learning may benefit low-proficiency learners, especially when combined with interest-based tasks. The model offers a practical framework for educators seeking to integrate AI into language education while promoting digital citizenship. The study acknowledges the limitations of self-report data, and directions for further research are suggested.*

Keywords: *AI-enhanced learning, digital literacy, language education, online behaviour, perceived learning outcomes*

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Introduction

The integration of AI-driven learning tools in education is transforming language acquisition and digital citizenship globally. For low-proficiency learners, tools such as ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit provide unique opportunities to enhance language skills, digital literacy, and ethical online behaviour. However, seizing these opportunities requires an understanding of how students perceive these tools and of how they can report their learning experiences. Such learners often face challenges, such as an over-reliance on literal translations, a lack of contextual understanding, and insufficient guidance in ethical tool use. Addressing these challenges requires structured, innovative instructional models tailored to meet the specific needs of low-proficiency learners.

The ‘Hobby Course’ described in this study was initially designed for higher-proficiency international students at a Thai university. It was adapted for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A1-level students enrolled in the university’s Faculty of Industrial Education and Technology. This adaptation emphasises practical learning through AI-based tools and hobby-based tasks. Previously, the Hobby Course proved successful in motivating learners through intrinsic engagement with personalised, hobby-centered activities (Watson Todd & Rangsarittikun, 2021). In the present adaptation, the model incorporated AI-supported tasks guided by the ‘instant noodle approach,’ a micro-learning strategy that allows students to complete small, manageable activities while building confidence and digital literacy. This approach reflects current discussions of AI as a potential disruptor of language education (Watson Todd, 2025), showing how a guided, ethical integration of AI tools can support basic-level learners.

Especially in the case of low-proficiency learners, the use of AI tools must be carefully scaffolded in order to address linguistic and technical barriers (Boonmoh & Kulavichian, 2023a). Structured activities like Reddit discussions and video tutorials provide practical opportunities to refine language use while fostering digital citizenship. The present study focuses on how students perceive their development of language skills, digital literacy, and ethical online behaviour during participation in an AI-enhanced Hobby Course at one Thai university. The research also considers the role of social-media communication in shaping ethical awareness, as discussed by Rangsarittikun and Watson Todd (2024). As a case study of a single course, the findings do not aim for generalisation but rather for contextual insights into students’ experiences and for their self-reported growth.

Research Questions

1. How does participation in an AI-enhanced model course influence students’ perceived development of English language skills (writing,

speaking, and multimodal communication) and their self-reported confidence in using these skills?

2. How do AI-based tools, e.g., ChatGPT and Google Translate, support students' perceived growth in digital literacy in educational contexts?

3. How do students develop ethical awareness and responsible online behaviour as part of digital citizenship in an AI-enhanced learning environment?

Literature Review

The Role of AI in Language Learning

AI-driven tools are reshaping language education by offering personalised learning pathways that adapt to individual needs. Tools like ChatGPT and Google Translate provide instant feedback and error correction, allowing learners to refine their writing and speaking skills (Annamalai et al., 2023; Mohamed, 2024). In many cases, their main benefit lies in how students perceive these tools as supportive and confidence-building, especially those who need continuous feedback and simplified explanations. These tools can also promote autonomy and self-regulated learning, fostering confidence among low-proficiency learners who require frequent feedback and support (Kim & Su, 2024; Egbert, 2020). Several studies have highlighted that regular feedback and practice through digital tools can increase learners' confidence in using English. In this study, confidence refers to learners' belief that they can successfully complete specific English tasks, such as writing online posts or speaking in front of others. When students receive quick feedback or can revise their work, their confidence usually grows over time (Egbert, 2020; Bui, 2024).

For speaking and conversational skills, AI chatbots simulate authentic interactions, encouraging learners to engage in real-world language use (Hockly, 2023). Research by Kim and Su (2024) demonstrated that chatbot use increased learners' willingness to communicate in a second language, reflecting similar self-reported gains to those investigated in the current study. Additionally, AI tools facilitate multimodal learning by enabling students to integrate text, speech, and visual elements, thereby enhancing overall communication skills (Črček & Patekar, 2023). Collaborative online platforms, as emphasised by Grothaus (2022), further extend these capabilities by creating environments where students can develop language and digital skills through interactive and authentic tasks. However, scholars also note that AI technologies must be integrated with caution, as over reliance can limit independent thinking or critical reflection (Alharbi, 2023; Halaweh, 2023). As Watson Todd (2025) explains, since generative AI has become a disrupter in language education,

educators need to guide students in using it responsibly and reflectively. These align well with the AI-supported model presented in this case study.

AI Tools for Low-Proficiency Learners

Low-proficiency learners face distinct challenges, including literal translations and limited contextual understanding when using AI tools (Boonmoh & Kulavichian, 2023b). Tools like ChatGPT and Google Translate serve as scaffolding devices, bridging gaps in comprehension and language production. However, these tools must be used with structured guidance to prevent errors and ensure meaningful learning outcomes (Halaweh, 2023). Thai studies also indicate that clear instructional scaffolding is crucial when integrating AI in English learning contexts. For example, Boonmoh and Kulavichian (2023a) found that Thai pre-service teachers often struggle with tool selection and ethical use, and Sanmuang et al. (2024) observed that even elderly EFL learners benefit from prompt-based learning when guidance is provided.

The current study draws on the principles of ‘just-in-time’ learning, as encapsulated in the ‘instant noodle approach’ introduced in this study. This strategy emphasises quick, accessible learning pathways that minimise cognitive overload while supporting iterative cycles of practice and feedback. This approach aligns with the concept of microlearning, which suggests that small, focused learning units enhance retention and lower anxiety (Chik, 2014). It also reflects one of the tenets of cognitive load theory, i.e., that reducing task complexity helps low-proficiency learners to build knowledge progressively. For instance, students can use Google Translate to draft posts for Reddit discussions, revise their work with teacher feedback, and repeat the process to refine their writing. This approach mirrors effective scaffolding techniques that promote confidence and gradual skill development. Hawley and Allen (2018) further suggest that projects involving iterative production, such as video tutorials, can encourage low-proficiency learners to take ownership of their learning and gradually develop autonomy. Such scaffolding-based, micro-task approaches are particularly relevant in the Thai context, where AI use in education is growing but still uneven (Boonmoh & Kulavichian, 2023a).

Digital Literacy and Citizenship in AI-Enhanced Learning

Digital literacy extends beyond technical skills to encompass critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and responsible online behaviour. Tools like ChatGPT and Google Translate often appear user-friendly but require careful instruction to ensure appropriate use (Alakrash & Abdul Razak, 2021). Educators play a vital role in guiding students to recognise AI limitations and to avoid over-reliance on such tools (Tour, 2020). Recent research emphasises that AI literacy must also include inculcating an awareness of privacy, data ethics, and authorship integrity (Rangsarittikun & Watson Todd, 2024).

In the present study, Reddit discussions provided an authentic platform for students to practice digital citizenship by engaging with real online communities. These activities required students to navigate public forums responsibly, respect intellectual property, and adhere to platform rules. Such experiences align with global calls to integrate ethical literacy into education, preparing students for responsible digital engagement in an increasingly AI-driven world (Tikhonova & Raitskaya, 2023). Yet, as Hockly (2023) and Williams (2024) caution, digital citizenship must also include critical evaluation of AI-generated content in order to prevent misinformation and unethical usage. Collaborative tasks, as highlighted by Chau et al. (2024), play a pivotal role in enhancing both intercultural communication and digital literacy, ensuring that students are equipped for a globally connected environment. In this sense, the current study contributes to discussions of how low-proficiency learners perceive and internalise digital ethics within real-world online contexts.

Empirical Studies from Hobby-Based Learning

Hobby-based learning, as demonstrated by Watson Todd and Rangsarittikun (2021), effectively enhances intrinsic motivation by aligning educational tasks with students' personal interests. Although initially designed for proficient learners, this study extends the Hobby Course framework to A1-level students, illustrating its potential for broader applicability. By focusing on hobbies, students engage with tasks that are personally relevant, fostering emotional investment and sustained motivation (Chik, 2014). In the Thai context, similar learner-centred strategies have been shown to increase both engagement and confidence in integrating technology (Boonmoh & Kulavichian, 2023b).

This study innovates on the Hobby Course by integrating AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit into its framework. The 'instant noodle approach' complements hobby-based learning by simplifying complex tasks into manageable steps. The combination of AI support, microlearning, and hobby-based tasks reflects a practical adaptation for low-proficiency learners, merging cognitive and motivational benefits. For example, video tutorials require students to script, record, and revise their work iteratively, enabling them to develop multimodal skills in a structured yet flexible environment. Such tasks not only build language proficiency but also enhance critical digital skills, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application (Hafner, 2014; Črček & Patekar, 2023). Moreover, the inclusion of collaborative digital tools aligns with the findings of Grothaus (2022), who emphasises the importance of interactive platforms in fostering both academic and social skills. These earlier findings support the present study's focus on how students perceive AI-supported, hobby-based learning as both engaging and confidence building.

Methodology

Research Design

This exploratory mixed-methods case study focuses on students' perceptions of AI-supported language learning and digital literacy development in one Thai university course. Quantitative survey data were combined with qualitative thematic analysis to provide both breadth and depth of understanding. This approach enabled an integrated exploration of how students perceived their experiences with AI-driven learning tools, allowing for triangulation of data from surveys, interviews, and student-generated artefacts such as video tutorials and Reddit posts. The 'case' in this study refers to one specific course context rather than to individual learners, and findings are context-bound rather than generalisable. The research examined three areas: students' perceived development of English language skills, i.e., writing, speaking, and multimodal production; their perceived growth in digital literacy; and their understanding of ethical online behaviour. The mixed-methods design aimed to describe learning experiences rather than measure actual skill gains.

Participants

The participants were drawn from the LNG120 General English course at a Thai university, comprising 355 first-year students across 11 sections. For this study, two sections, totalling 79 students, were selected, focusing on students from the Faculty of Industrial Education and Technology. These students were CEFR A1-level English learners, representing the low-proficiency learner group targeted in this study. The sample was selected through convenience and purposive sampling to represent typical low-proficiency learners within this program. This sample was chosen to provide a manageable yet representative subset of the larger student population.

Additionally, six students were purposefully selected for semi-structured interviews. These participants were chosen based on varying levels of engagement in course activities, such as Reddit discussions and video tutorial production. This purposeful sampling aimed to capture diverse perspectives on the use of AI-driven tools and their impact on learning. The qualitative data were obtained to provide depth and to illustrate students' reported experiences, rather than statistical representativeness. The findings are context-specific and are not intended for generalisation beyond this case.

Instruments

Survey

A self-administered survey in Thai, distributed via Google Forms, was employed to evaluate students' perceptions of their learning outcomes across four key areas: Language Skills (writing, speaking, and multimodal production), Digital Literacy (proficiency in using AI tools such as Google Translate, ChatGPT, and Reddit), Ethical Awareness and Online Behaviour (understanding of privacy, copyright, and appropriate tool use), and Course Experience (students' overall impressions of the course, its motivational impact, and their preference compared to traditional grammar lessons).

The survey consisted of 16 Likert-scale items rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Items were drawn and adapted from validated instruments used in prior research on AI-enhanced education (Črček & Patekar, 2023) and supplemented with three additional items under Course Experience to capture students' subjective feedback on the course design. These additions provided valuable insights into how students perceived the innovative teaching approach compared to conventional methods.

In this study, 'confidence' means students' belief that they can successfully complete specific English tasks, such as writing Reddit posts or speaking in videos. Confidence is measured through survey items related to these tasks and is illustrated by comments from the interviews.

To ensure that the instrument was accessible to A1-level learners, the survey was piloted with a small group of participants from the same proficiency level. Minor modifications were made based on feedback in order to improve clarity and readability for students with limited English proficiency. Internal consistency and so reliability were examined using Cronbach's α , which indicated a satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$). The final version of the survey was reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), ensuring compliance with ethical research guidelines.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into students' experiences with the course. The interview protocol was designed around four key themes: Digital Literacy in AI tools, e.g., how students engaged with Google Translate and ChatGPT; Ethical Awareness and Online Behaviour, e.g., responsible use of digital tools; reflections on learning tasks, e.g., confidence and skill development through Reddit discussions and video tutorials; and self-reflection, e.g., perceptions of the 'instant noodle approach'.

Interviews were conducted individually, in person, and lasted 10–15 minutes. To ensure that participants could express themselves comfortably and clearly, the interviews were conducted in Thai. Audio recordings of the interviews were

transcribed and subsequently translated into English for thematic analysis. Interview data were used to illustrate patterns emerging from the survey and from the analysis of student artefacts, highlighting how students described their perceived learning progress and confidence development.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process spanned one entire semester and was structured into three phases: Phase 1: Training and Orientation (Weeks 1–5) introduced students to the course structure, learning objectives, and the AI tools, including ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit. This phase emphasised ethical considerations, such as privacy protection and intellectual property awareness, establishing a foundational understanding of the tools and guidelines for their appropriate use.

Phase 2: Implementation of Learning Tasks involved two main activities. During Weeks 1–7, students participated in Reddit discussions, where they posted and interacted with others by reflecting on their hobbies while adhering to platform rules. These activities focused on language use, digital citizenship, and peer engagement. For Weeks 8–14, students engaged in video tutorial creation, which involved planning, scripting, recording, and editing videos that showcased hobby-related activities. Feedback cycles from peers and instructors helped students refine their work iteratively.

Phase 3: Data Collection (Week 15) concluded the semester with the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was distributed online via Google Forms, yielding 79 responses. Six participants participated in semi-structured interviews to provide detailed insights into their learning experiences. Additionally, student outputs, including Reddit posts and video tutorials, were reviewed and analysed for evidence of language improvement and ethical awareness. Public Reddit posts were collected in compliance with the platform's terms of use and anonymised before analysis to protect privacy.

Data Analysis

Survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to evaluate students' perceived improvements across four key areas: Language Skills, Digital Literacy, Ethical Awareness, and Course Experience. These analyses provided an overview of general trends, highlighting the strengths and areas of reported impact for the AI-enhanced Hobby Course. The inclusion of the Course Experience items allowed for additional insights into students' overall perceptions of the course's effectiveness and its motivational impact compared to traditional grammar-focused instruction. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of learning trends, rather than inferential generalisation.

Thematic analysis was applied to the interview transcripts and to student outputs. The process began with familiarisation, where transcripts and outputs were read multiple times to identify recurring patterns. Initial coding was performed in order to assign labels to concepts such as ‘confidence building’ and ‘privacy awareness’. These codes were then grouped into broader themes aligned with the research questions. To enhance credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing the findings from the surveys, interviews, and artefacts. Reddit discussions were analysed for examples of writing revision, peer interaction, and ethical online conduct, while video tutorials were evaluated for language clarity, multimodal presentation, and reflections on responsible AI use. These qualitative findings served to illustrate and contextualise the trends detected in the survey results.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants’ rights and privacy. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi under protocol KMUTT-IRB-COA-2025-001. All the participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Pseudonyms were used in interview transcripts to maintain confidentiality, and no personal identifiers were collected. Publicly available online data (Reddit posts) were anonymised before inclusion in the dataset, and any identifying information was removed. Data were securely stored on encrypted servers, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Ethical awareness was also included as part of the instructional process, encouraging students to reflect on responsible tool use and privacy management throughout the course.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, addressing the three key objectives aligned with the research questions: (1) Students’ perceived development of language skills, (2) Students’ perceived enhancement of digital literacy, and (3) Students’ perceived growth in ethical awareness and online behaviour. The results derive from the survey responses from 79 students, the thematic analysis of 6 student interviews, and student-generated outputs such as Reddit posts and video tutorials. All quantitative findings are based on self-reported perceptions rather than objective performance data. Qualitative excerpts are used to illustrate these reported perceptions.

Table 1. *Survey Results on Students' Perceptions of Language Skills, Digital Literacy, Ethical Awareness, and Course Experience*

Key Areas	Survey Items	Mean (M)	SD
Language Skills	I have improved my ability to write clearly.	4.35	0.56
	I feel more confident in speaking.	4.28	0.62
	I can produce multimodal outputs (like videos).	4.12	0.68
Digital Literacy	I have improved my proficiency in using Google Translate.	4.45	0.50
	I have improved my proficiency in using ChatGPT.	4.32	0.58
	I can conduct advanced searches on Google.	4.25	0.61
	I can create and edit video content.	4.38	0.54
Ethical Awareness	I am aware of online privacy risks.	4.48	0.52
	I understand copyright issues.	4.30	0.60
	I can identify trustworthy online sources.	4.29	0.59
	I follow ethical guidelines when using online tools.	4.42	0.55
	I follow platform rules when posting online.	4.41	0.56
	I do not share personal information online.	4.52	0.50
Course Experience	I enjoy this course more than traditional grammar lessons.	4.58	0.50
	This course motivates me to learn English.	4.55	0.52
	I would recommend this course to others.	4.60	0.48

Development of Language Skills

The first research question focused on perceived changes in English language skills, including writing, speaking, and multimodal production. As shown in Table 1, reported improvement and confidence in their writing skills ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.56$), confidence in speaking ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.62$), and the ability to create multimodal outputs, such as video tutorials ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.68$).

The students' reflections indicated that their sense of writing improvement derived from structured feedback and revision cycles on Reddit. Student 2 reflected, "On Reddit, I learned that sometimes my first post was not good enough. But the teacher made me check my grammar, and I could see my own mistakes." Similarly, Student 5 shared, "At first, I thought my post was perfect, but when I got feedback, I saw how many errors I made. After editing and re-posting, I felt more confident in my writing." These examples illustrate students' reported perceptions of growth rather than measured linguistic gains.

In speaking, students reported feeling more comfortable as they created and refined video tutorials using the 'instant noodle approach'. Student 3 remarked, "Making a video was tough at first, but after doing it step-by-step and getting

feedback, I became more comfortable. I realized that speaking in front of a camera is a form of practice.” Peer feedback also contributed to perceived confidence building. Student 1 explained, “When I heard comments from my friends, they told me to speak slowly and clearly. I took this advice, and my second video was much better.” These qualitative excerpts suggest that structured, iterative learning and peer interaction encouraged students to perceive improvement in their communication abilities.

Enhancement of Digital Literacy

The second research question examined how the students perceived the role of AI tools in developing digital literacy. Survey data revealed significant gains in students’ reported proficiency with Google Translate ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.50$) and in terms of their ability to create and edit videos ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.54$). Students also reported improvements in their use of ChatGPT ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.58$) and advanced Google search techniques ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.61$).

Interview comments revealed how students moved from being passive to being more strategic users of technology. Student 3 explained, “At first, I thought Google Translate was just for translating words. But, I learned to write simpler sentences and even check accuracy by translating back and forth.” This perception shows students’ growing awareness of how to use AI tools more critically and purposefully.

Students also described refining their skills in prompt writing for ChatGPT. As Student 5 noted, “ChatGPT helped me simplify text and make it sound more natural. I realised I could give clear prompts, and it would give me better answers.” The iterative nature of creating and editing videos also contributed to students’ perceived development of multimodal digital skills. Student 6 shared, “At first, I found video editing challenging because I was unfamiliar with the software. However, with practice and support from friends, I gradually improved.”

These accounts highlight how students perceived themselves as becoming more independent and confident users of AI-supported tools. The analysis of artefacts, such as Reddit posts and videos, serves as illustrative evidence of these perceptions, showing students’ experimentation with different digital tools.

Growth in Ethical Awareness and Online Behaviour

The third research question explored students’ perceived ethical awareness and use of responsible online behaviour. Survey results suggested high levels of awareness across all items related to ethical behaviour, with the highest scores for “I do not share personal information online” ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.50$) and “I follow ethical guidelines when using online tools” ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.55$). Students also reported a significant understanding of copyright issues ($M =$

4.30, SD = 0.60) and the ability to identify trustworthy online sources (M = 4.29, SD = 0.59).

Interview data further supported these findings. Student 1 shared, “On Reddit, I learned to follow platform rules. My post was banned once for using an inappropriate image, so now I’m much more careful.” This illustrates perceived ethical learning through real-world experiences rather than formal instruction.

Students also recalled key messages about responsible AI use. Student 5 said, “The teacher always said not to share personal information online. This made me more aware of the risks and how to use tools responsibly.” Similarly, Student 2 remarked, “The teacher always emphasised, ‘Don’t let the tools control you – control the tools.’ That changed how I approach technology.” These comments reflect students’ perceived internalisation of ethical awareness and digital responsibility.

Privacy protection and respect for copyright were recurring themes in both interviews and artefacts. The analysis of students’ Reddit posts showed that they avoided sharing personal details and cited image sources properly after feedback, suggesting greater ethical sensitivity.

Overall, students perceived themselves as becoming more mindful and responsible digital citizens, with these perceptions being self-reported rather than behaviourally measured.

Course Experience

The final part of the survey explored students’ perceived satisfaction with and motivation for the AI-supported Hobby Course. Ratings were consistently high, with “I would recommend this course to others” (M = 4.60, SD = 0.48) scoring the highest, followed by “I enjoy this course more than traditional grammar lessons” (M = 4.58, SD = 0.50) and “This course motivates me to learn English” (M = 4.55, SD = 0.52).

Students described the course as engaging and relevant. Student 3 stated, “This course is very different from what I’ve done before. It makes learning English more fun because I can talk about my hobbies and use tools like ChatGPT and Reddit.” Student 4 added, “I used to hate grammar lessons because they were so hard. But in this course, I learned step by step, and it made me want to keep improving.” These reflections align with survey trends showing strong positive perceptions of motivation and enjoyment.

Students also valued the real-world usefulness of the tasks. Student 5 noted, “The tools we used are things I can actually use outside of school. It’s not just about passing a test – it’s about real-life English.”

Overall, these findings suggest that students perceived the AI-supported, hobby-based approach as engaging, practical, and motivating. The positive perceptions reflected in both the quantitative and qualitative data highlight how carefully structured AI-enhanced tasks can improve the confidence and enjoyment of low-proficiency learners.

Discussion

Language Skills Development

This study explored how an AI-enhanced Hobby Course impacted students' perceived language development and confidence. Firstly, we address RQ1: How does participation in an AI-enhanced model course shape students' perceptions of their English language skills (writing, speaking, and multimodal skills) and their confidence in using these skills? The findings reveal that students perceived notable improvements in their writing, speaking, and multimodal production, underpinned throughout by task-based and iterative learning processes.

Students demonstrated reported growth in writing through structured Reddit discussions that required them to create posts, reflect on feedback, and revise their work. This iterative process deepened their engagement with language structures, echoing Hafner's (2014) and Egbert's (2020) observations that authentic, task-based digital activities promote writing fluency and clarity. Similarly, Črček and Patekar's (2023) emphasis on learning through feedback and revision resonates with the course's design, which cultivated students' confidence in written communication. Grothaus (2022) further supports the role of collaborative and reflective tasks in building effective communication skills in online contexts.

An equally noteworthy finding was the perceived increase in speaking confidence. The iterative production of video tutorials provided a low-stakes environment for students to rehearse, record, and refine their oral presentations. Bui (2024) noted similar benefits, emphasising how reflection and iterative cycles can reduce speaking anxiety and enhance self-efficacy. Furthermore, the multimodal nature of these activities supported integrated language development, as students combined speaking, writing, and visual presentation skills – an approach validated by Nami and Asadnia's (2024) findings on self-created digital content. Hawley and Allen (2018) reinforce this view, emphasising the transformative potential of video creation in fostering both language skills and critical thinking.

The present findings also correspond with those of Rangsarittikun and Watson Todd (2024), who demonstrated that structured, multimodal communication on social media enhances clarity and audience awareness, these being skills similar

to those practised by students in this course. This suggests that the combination of AI tools and hobby-based activities can support effective, context-sensitive communication even in low-proficiency learners.

The ‘instant noodle’ approach, a pedagogical framework emphasising accessible, iterative tasks, played a central role in these outcomes. Unlike traditional grammar-focused methodologies, this approach fostered learner autonomy by prioritising small, achievable steps. Watson Todd and Rangsarittikun (2021) and Chik (2014) advocate for such learner-centred strategies, which emphasise practical, confidence-building activities tailored to learners’ contexts and capabilities. From a theoretical viewpoint, the ‘instant noodle’ approach aligns with the principles of microlearning and cognitive load theory, with a focus on enabling learners to process manageable units of input and to gradually build linguistic confidence.

Digital Literacy Enhancement

The course also examined students’ perceived digital literacy, addressing RQ2: How do AI-based tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Translate) support the perceived development of students’ digital literacy in educational contexts? The findings highlight students’ reported transition from passive to strategic users of AI tools, showing an improved ability to critically engage with technology.

Students’ reported proficiency with Google Translate and ChatGPT improved significantly, as they adopted techniques like reverse translation and prompt refinement. These practices developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills, aligning with Mohamed’s (2024) findings that AI tools, when paired with appropriate scaffolding, foster self-regulation and strategic learning. Additionally, Ovcharuk et al. (2020) note that such tool mastery not only democratises learning but also equips learners with skills essential for lifelong education.

These outcomes mirror Boonmoh and Kulavichian’s (2023a) study on Thai pre-service teachers, who gradually developed digital competence through scaffolded use of educational technologies based on the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) model. Similarly, low-proficiency learners in the present study learned to integrate AI tools at the substitution and augmentation levels before reaching more creative applications, illustrating a comparable developmental process.

The concept of algorithmic literacy, emphasising active control over AI tools, emerged as a pivotal theme. Students recognised the limitations of AI outputs and learned to provide precise prompts to ChatGPT for more effective results. Williams (2024) and Hockly (2023) similarly emphasise the importance of

teaching learners to critically evaluate and strategically use digital tools, fostering a balance between human agency and technological assistance.

The iterative production of video tutorials further enhanced students' multimodal literacy. By scripting, recording, and editing their videos, students developed integrated digital skills, in line with Tour's (2020) and Hafner's (2014) advocacy for multimodal learning as a cornerstone of digital literacy. The 'instant noodle' approach facilitated this progression, breaking complex tasks into manageable steps and fostering gradual yet meaningful skill development. This process also reflects the findings of Sanmuang et al. (2024), who reported that elderly Thai EFL learners improved their confidence and digital awareness when guided to use ChatGPT prompts to promote community products, suggesting that effective scaffolding, rather than age or proficiency, is key to successful AI-based learning.

At the same time, students' reflections on Google Translate use echo the findings of Boonmoh and Kulavichian's (2023b) study, which found that Thai EFL learners often struggle with literal translation and contextual accuracy. The present findings suggest that repeated feedback and guided revision can help learners to move beyond translation dependency toward contextual understanding, an important step in digital literacy development.

Ethical Awareness and Digital Citizenship

Addressing RQ3: How do students perceive their ethical awareness and responsible online behaviour as part of digital citizenship in an AI-enhanced environment? The findings indicate substantial reported awareness of privacy, copyright, and responsible tool use. These perceptions were shaped by authentic, real-world experiences that required students to act responsibly within digital spaces.

Specifically, the students' participation in Reddit discussions cultivated practical awareness of platform rules and appreciation for the consequences of unethical actions, such as posting inappropriate content. This experiential learning aligns with Tikhonova and Raitskaya's (2023) argument that real-world tasks are instrumental in fostering ethical digital practices. Similarly, Grothaus (2022) emphasises the importance of navigating cultural and contextual nuances in collaborative online environments, a skill students developed through their interactions.

An emphasis on 'controlling the tools, not being controlled by them' was a central theme in both teacher guidance and student reflections. This principle helped students internalise ethical practices, such as verifying AI outputs and safeguarding personal data, in line with Hockly's (2023) call for critical digital literacy. The inclusion of structured teacher guidance corresponds with

the findings of Sanmuang et al. (2024), who highlighted the role of teacher facilitation in shaping Thai students' positive attitudes toward ChatGPT.

By engaging in video production and Reddit interactions, students encountered real-world dilemmas involving privacy, copyright, and digital etiquette. These experiences echoed Chau et al.'s (2024) findings that collaborative online learning environments foster ethical reflection and intercultural competence. Moreover, Major et al. (2021) emphasise that ethical literacy should complement technical proficiency, a balance effectively achieved in this course. These findings also resonate with those of Watson Todd (2025), who warned that generative AI may disrupt language education if ethical awareness and critical pedagogy are neglected. The present course model demonstrates a constructive way to address these concerns through explicit ethical instruction.

Course Experience and Its Broader Implications

The inclusion of Course Experience as a focus area demonstrated the potential of AI-enhanced Hobby Courses to transform learners' perceptions of satisfaction and engagement with language learning. This study reveals how the integration of meaningful, hobby-based tasks with advanced digital tools can foster emotional and motivational connections to learning, addressing the challenges often encountered by low-proficiency learners.

These findings align with existing research on the benefits of hobby-based learning and task-based approaches in language instruction. Hawley and Allen (2018) emphasize that incorporating creative outputs, such as video production, encourages emotional engagement and learner autonomy. Similarly, Chik (2014) underscores the importance of aligning educational activities with learners' personal interests to sustain motivation and promote active learning. By incorporating tools like ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit, the course provided an engaging and contextually relevant framework for language development, consistent with Firat's (2023) emphasis on the transformative role of AI tools in modern education.

The positive reception of the course is also in line with a Thai study by Boonmoh and Kulavichian (2023a), who found that integrating technology in manageable, familiar stages enhances the motivation of pre-service teachers. For A1-level students, this gradual, hobby-based engagement may similarly reduce anxiety and promote willingness to learn.

High satisfaction ratings for survey items under Course Experience, such as "I would recommend this course to others" ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.48$), highlight the broader pedagogical value of AI-enhanced hobby-based models. These results echo Alakrash and Abdul Razak's (2021) argument that digital literacy, when effectively integrated into EFL contexts, can enhance both motivation

and practical skill development. Furthermore, this study reinforces the need for courses to prioritize enjoyment and engagement as core elements of the learning process.

However, while students' self-reported outcomes were strongly positive, these data represent perceived experiences rather than measured proficiency gains. Future iterations of this course should include pre- and post-assessments or linguistic analyses of artefacts in order to objectively confirm these trends.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-enhanced learning, offering both theoretical insights and practical applications. The 'instant noodle' approach provides a micro-scaffolded learning framework that integrates AI tools into low-resource educational settings, particularly for low-proficiency learners. Its focus on iterative, accessible tasks bridges the gap between traditional pedagogy and the needs of 21st-century learners, fostering both language proficiency and digital literacy.

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasise the need for educators to prioritise authentic, task-based activities that leverage AI tools strategically. For instance, incorporating tools like ChatGPT and Google Translate into hobby-based curricula can enhance engagement and provide students with practical skills applicable in real-world contexts. Additionally, embedding ethical literacy as a core component ensures that learners become responsible and reflective users of technology.

At the institutional level, this study supports Watson Todd's (2025) call for the balanced integration of generative AI into language curricula, thereby encouraging creativity and critical use while safeguarding ethical and pedagogical standards.

Policymakers and curriculum designers can draw from these findings to develop cost-effective, scalable models that bridge linguistic and digital divides. By aligning learning tasks with learners' interests and contextual needs, such models can sustain motivation and engagement, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights, several limitations should be noted. The findings are based on students' self-reported perceptions and on qualitative reflections rather than on objective measures of language performance. The small number of interview participants limits the generalisability of qualitative interpretations. Future research could include pre- and post-tests, language analysis of artefacts, or longitudinal tracking of skill retention.

Moreover, the present study focused on a single institutional context. Comparative studies across faculties or universities could test the adaptability of the AI-enhanced Hobby Course model. Further exploration of the ‘instant noodle’ approach may also clarify its theoretical foundations in microlearning and cognitive load management.

Finally, researching the ethical dimensions of AI use in education requires continuous examination, particularly concerning data privacy, bias, and the issue of authorship in the case of generative tools. Future studies could investigate how teachers can balance innovation with responsibility in diverse EFL contexts.

Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of AI-supported learning and examine its adaptability in multilingual, low-resource, and rural contexts. Emerging technologies such as multimodal AI systems offer opportunities to refine and expand the model’s applicability, ensuring that AI serves as a bridge, not as a barrier, to inclusive and ethical language education.

Conclusion

This study illustrates the potential of AI-enhanced learning models for low-proficiency learners, demonstrating how tools like ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Reddit can foster perceived improvements in language confidence, digital literacy, and ethical awareness. By integrating iterative, task-based activities within a structured Hobby Course, the study empowered A1-level learners to become more confident, critical, and ethical users of digital tools.

These results contribute to current discussions on the use of AI in education (Watson Todd, 2025), showing that effective integration depends not only on technology but also on pedagogy, guidance, and ethical reflection.

The findings provide direct answers to the research questions. First, the iterative learning design significantly enhanced the students’ writing, speaking, and multimodal production skills, as evidenced by improved confidence and output quality. Second, the students developed better digital literacy skills by learning to use AI tools strategically, moving from passive use to active problem-solving and critical engagement. Third, through real-world tasks and teacher guidance, the students cultivated a deeper understanding of ethical principles, including privacy protection, copyright adherence, and responsible online behaviour. The practical implications of these findings are significant. The Hobby Course model offers a replicable and scalable framework for integrating AI tools into low-resource educational contexts, supporting underserved populations globally. Its learner-centred approach emphasises authentic, engaging tasks that align with students’ interests, promoting intrinsic motivation and sustainable learning outcomes. Embedding ethical training into AI-enhanced curricula ensures that

students are equipped to navigate digital spaces responsibly, a critical skill in today's interconnected world.

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TPACK LEVEL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AMONG NOVICE AND EXPERIENCED EFL UNIVERSITY TEACHERS: INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIA

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Abstract: *Although the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework has been widely used to investigate teachers' integration of technology, few studies have compared novice and experienced EFL university teachers in terms of their TPACK levels and professional development strategies. This study addresses this gap by employing a quantitative and qualitative approach that combined questionnaire and semi-structured interviews data from sixty-four participants, thirty-two novice and thirty-two experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university teachers. Both descriptive and statistical analyses were performed on quantitative data. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. The quantitative findings revealed that novice EFL university teachers demonstrated a high level of technological knowledge (TK), content knowledge (CK), and technological content knowledge (TCK) but only a moderate level in pedagogical knowledge (PK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), and TPACK. In contrast, experienced EFL university teachers reported a very high level of CK and PK, high PCK, TCK, TPK, and TPACK, and slightly stronger TK than their novice counterparts, suggesting that professional experience strengthens pedagogical and integrative knowledge. The qualitative findings revealed that both novice and experienced EFL university teachers actively engaged in similar informal, self-directed strategies, including watching instructional videos, utilizing social media, engaging in peer supervision, and engaging in books and articles. However, only experienced EFL university teachers participated in formal professional learning such as international conferences and institutional training, which provided them with broader professional exposure. These findings highlight the need for differentiated professional development, including mentoring and reflective practice for novices, as well as innovation-oriented training for experienced ones.*

Keywords: *Experienced EFL university teachers, Novice EFL university teachers, Professional development strategies, Technology integration, TPACK*

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Introduction

It is widely recognized that the quality of teaching in higher education is strongly influenced by teachers' ability to integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, this integration has become increasingly crucial as universities respond to rapid technological advancements and the demands of 21st-century learning (Goradia, 2018; Shafie et al., 2019). While teacher professional development (TPD) has been widely acknowledged as essential to improving teaching practices (Villegas-Reimers, 2003), the literature often treats teachers as a homogeneous group without differentiating their diverse experiences and professional trajectories. In fact, teachers enter higher education with varying levels of experience, which inevitably shapes their classroom practices.

The distinction between novice and experienced teachers is particularly relevant in understanding their professional needs and challenges. According to Farrell (2012), a novice teacher is someone teaching a new course for the first time, a stage often marked by uncertainty, insecurity, powerlessness, loneliness, and alienation (Bar-Tal et al., 2020). In practice, novice teachers are generally defined as those with one to five years of teaching experience (Mehrpour & Mirsanjari, 2016; Widiati et al., 2018). While they typically possess strong theoretical knowledge of English, they often lack practical experience in pedagogy and technology integration, leading to a "reality shock" when the concepts learned in their education program do not easily transfer to actual classrooms, where they must sustain focus for long hours while managing large groups of students (Akcór & Savasci, 2020). Their struggles are further compounded by feelings of professional identity uncertainty and the pressure to adapt quickly to institutional demands (Aniq & Drajadi, 2019).

In contrast, experienced teachers, those with more than five years of teaching experience (Hosseini et al., 2017), tend to demonstrate strong pedagogical content knowledge built from years of practice and professional maturity. However, they may face difficulties in adopting emerging technologies or reconciling them with long-standing teaching practices, which necessitate ongoing efforts to update and refine their digital competencies. Taken together, these differences highlight the importance of distinguishing between novice and experienced teachers, while also highlighting the need to assess their technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) levels and develop appropriate strategies for effective professional development. This need becomes even more significant when viewed in light of the national standards governing the teaching profession in Indonesia. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14/2005 states that university teachers, as professional educators, must have the necessary academic qualifications, at least a master's degree in the subject they teach, competencies, and a teaching certificate, as well as be

physically and mentally healthy to achieve national education goals (Undang-undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005). Teacher competencies, as outlined in the law, include pedagogical, personal, social, and professional skills gained through professional education, while teaching certificates are granted once these requirements are fulfilled.

In response to the challenges faced by novice and experienced EFL university teachers, the framework of TPACK emerges as a comprehensive model that emphasizes the integration of technology with pedagogical strategies and subject matter expertise. It provides a lens to evaluate teachers' strengths and gaps, guiding professional development initiatives that help novice teachers bridge the theory–practice divide while enabling experienced teachers to adapt their established practices to new technological demands. In the global context, a study from Nazari et al. (2021) demonstrated that novice and experienced EFL teachers differ significantly in their perceived TPACK, with novices often displaying more confidence in certain technological aspects, while experienced teachers excel in pedagogy and content knowledge. Similarly, Nabhani et al. (2014) highlighted that teachers' efficacy in technology-integrated classrooms depends on targeted professional development that strengthens both pedagogical and technological domains. These findings emphasize the urgency of using the TPACK framework to design professional development programs that are responsive to teachers' varying levels of knowledge.

In the Indonesian context, numerous studies have been conducted on novice and experienced teachers. Widiati et al. (2018) examined the challenges faced by Indonesian novice teachers of English. Anggraeni and Rachmajanti (2021) explored novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of the need for ongoing professional development. Khalisa et al. (2022) reported novice EFL Indonesian teachers' perspectives on early teaching challenges and strategies. More recently, Laksmi et al. (2025), Pramesti et al. (2025), and Florida and Mbato (2020) carried out similar studies that highlighted the variations and similarities in the instructional strategies preferred by novice and experienced EFL junior high school teachers, though with different participants. Most of these studies focused on school teachers, while only a few investigated university teachers. Examining novice and experienced EFL teachers in higher education is vital, as university teachers face unique challenges such as balancing teaching with research, meeting publication demands, and addressing diverse adult learners' needs. Studying them offers insights into how TPACK develops in specialized academic contexts, which is crucial for strengthening teacher education and improving tertiary education quality.

Studies on identifying novice and experienced EFL university teachers' TPACK level, as well as strategies to accelerate their knowledge, remain limited. Hastomo et al. (2024) conducted a mixed-method study that examined EFL pre-service

teachers' technological knowledge (TK) in relation to the use of AI-powered tools and explored their strategies for advancing this knowledge through semi-structured interviews and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. However, the study was confined to pre-service teachers and addressed only the TK component, leaving out other essential elements of TPACK. This creates a gap in understanding how novice and experienced EFL university teachers develop and enhance their TPACK in real classroom contexts. In light of this, the present study is intended to investigate the TPACK levels of novice and experienced EFL university teachers in the Indonesian context. The findings are expected to provide evidence for bottom-up, need-based professional development programs, which are more sustainable and responsive than traditional top-down in-service training models (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Therefore, the present study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the TPACK levels of novice and experienced EFL university teachers?
2. What strategies do they use to accelerate their knowledge to sustain their professional development?

Literature Review

TPACK Framework in EFL Education: Current and Limited Studies

The framework of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), developed by Koehler and Mishra (2009), has become a significant lens for analyzing how well teachers use technology in their lesson plans. In contrast to previous models that addressed technological knowledge separately, TPACK places a strong emphasis on the intersection of three fundamental knowledge domains, technology, pedagogy, and content, as well as their dynamic interconnections. This integrated approach is important in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as teachers are required to provide digital activities that promote communicative skills in addition to managing linguistic content (Aniq & Draji, 2019).

Several studies have examined TPACK by understanding the challenges and opportunities (Taopan et al., 2020), proposing practical implications (Lisa et al., 2021), validating the framework (Bagheri, 2020), evaluating teachers' level of knowledge (Nazari et al., 2019), reconceptualizing (Cherner & Smith, 2017) and reframing (Celik, 2023). In the global context, studies on teachers' understanding of TPACK, particularly in English language teaching, have yielded various results and implications. Najjari et al. (2021) revealed that TPACK literacy among participants reported that their perceptions of TPACK literacy changed in light of TPACK workshops. Raygan and Moradkhani (2022) found that

teachers' attitudes and TPACK strongly predict technology integration, with school climate mediating the link between attitude and adoption. Zhang and Fang (2022) validated that integrating Flipped Classroom design into TPACK produced an FC-situated TPACK. Teacher efficacy grew through better student performance, supportive leadership, collaboration, and openness to technology, confirming its link to TPACK and teaching performance.

In Indonesia, numerous studies have been conducted to examine the understanding of TPACK perceived by pre-service teachers (Ciptaningrum, 2017; Habibi et al., 2020; Irwanto et al., 2022; Kusuma, 2021) and in-service teachers (Cahyono et al., 2016; Drajadi et al., 2018; Novita et al., 2022; Rajiha et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2021). The related studies examine TPACK in in-service teachers in terms of multimodal literacy (Drajati et al., 2018), socioculturally based TPACK (Novita et al., 2022), and TPACK evaluation instruments (Prasojo et al., 2020). Unfortunately, these studies did not portray the level of TPACK perceived by novice and experienced university teachers. Understanding their TPACK level contributed to the stakeholders and policymakers' decision on teachers' professional development programs that fit their needs. Thus, this study is significant in response to the potential contributions.

Professional Development for TPACK growth

Teacher professional development (TPD) is a continuous, career-long process of growth, reflection, and adaptation to students' needs (Diaz-Maggioli, 2023). TPD occurs through both formal learning (e.g., workshops, training, conferences) and informal learning (e.g., reading, collegial dialogue, self-directed activities) (Kyndt et al., 2016; Manuti et al., 2015; Zeng, 2023). It enables teachers to refine subject knowledge, teaching skills, and instructional strategies through continuous reflection and improvement.

In the global context, teacher professional development (TPD) equips teachers with updated pedagogical techniques that enhance instructional quality and positively impact student achievement (Fauth et al., 2014; Zhang & Fang, 2022). TPD also reshapes teachers' conceptions of classroom practices, such as the provision of corrective feedback, fostering more reflective and intentional approaches (Ha & Murray, 2021), contributing to both instructional competence and improved student outcomes. In the Indonesian context, however, several challenges remain. Averina and Kuswandono (2023) found that TPD activities enhanced pre-service teachers' skills and attitudes but were hindered by workload, time constraints, limited program options, poor alignment with teachers' needs, and short program duration. With respect to technology-mediated TPD, Saiful (2020) reported that most school teachers viewed smartphones as beneficial for TPD, though some favored face-to-face methods. The study recommended

optimizing smartphone-based TPD with government support through dedicated models and applications. Similarly, Dewi et al. (2024) revealed that teachers valued PD for knowledge, pedagogy, and language proficiency, but overall participation remained low, highlighting the need to address key barriers to sustain professional growth.

Despite these insights, little is known about how novice and experienced EFL university teachers differ in adopting strategies to accelerate their professional development. Existing studies emphasize the benefits and challenges of TPD in general but do not adequately explore how teachers at different career stages navigate workloads, program alignment, or technology-enhanced opportunities. Addressing this gap is critical to designing differentiated TPD models that empower novice EFL university teachers to build foundational competencies while enabling experienced EFL university teachers to refine and expand their professional practices.

Method

Study Design and Participants

This study adopted a mixed-method design, employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the primary instruments for data collection. The quantitative component was used to gather data on the TPACK levels of novice and experienced EFL university teachers, while the qualitative component explored the strategies employed to accelerate their knowledge and sustain their professional development. The study combined questionnaires and interviews, providing meaningful insights into their professional practices. This approach enhances the relevance of the findings and offers guidance for designing professional development programs, while paving the way for future research with larger, more diverse groups. A total of sixty-four EFL university teachers in Indonesia participated in the study, consisting of thirty-two novice teachers and thirty-two experienced teachers. A balanced distribution allows a fair comparison between the two groups, making it easier to link differences in findings to teaching experience rather than sample imbalance. The study included sixty-four EFL university teachers, which is a moderate sample size that still offers useful insights into their TPACK levels and professional development strategies. However, because the sample is limited, the results should be interpreted cautiously and may not apply to all EFL university teachers in Indonesia.

The selection of participants was purposeful, aimed at ensuring representation from both novice and experienced categories, as their professional trajectories are central to the study's objectives. In this study, the term 'EFL university

teachers’ refers to lecturers teaching at universities who meet the criteria established in Law No. 14/2005 of the Republic of Indonesia, which includes holding a master’s degree or higher in their teaching subject related to English. These teachers, however, differ in terms of teaching experience, academic qualifications, and certification status. Following the definition from Mehrpour and Mirsanjari (2016) and Widiati et al. (2018), novice EFL university teachers are defined as those with fewer than five years of teaching experience. Many novice teachers have not yet obtained a teaching certificate, as eligibility for professional certification begins after a minimum of two years of teaching service and is associated with the rank of assistant professor. In practice, this process may take longer due to constraints such as administrative obstacles and limited understanding of certification regulations (Oktapani, 2019). In contrast, experienced EFL university teachers, as defined by Hosseini et al. (2017), are those with more than five years of teaching experience. They are considered professional educators, as they hold the required teaching certificate and typically serve as Assistant Professors or in higher academic ranks. The participants’ demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Participants’ Demographic Information (N=64)*

Categories	EFL Novice University Teacher	EFL Experienced University Teacher
Teaching Experience	1-2 years= 25 3 years= 7	8-10 years= 17 >11 years=15
Gender	Female= 19 Male= 13	Female= 20 Male= 12
Age	24-27 years= 21 28-30 years= 10 >30 years = 1	31-35 years= 18 36-40 years= 4 >40 years = 10
Academic Degree	All masters	Master= 27 Doctoral= 5

Data Collection Procedure

To obtain quantitative data on the TPACK level of novice and experienced EFL university teachers, this study adapted a validated questionnaire from Baser et al. (2016) and Nazari et al. (2021), containing 39 statements. The detailed instrument of the questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Questionnaire Map on TPACK Components*

Questionnaire	Number of Items	Component	Number of Component Items
TPACK levels of Novice and Experienced EFL University Teachers	39	TK	9
		CK	5
		PK	6
		PCK	5
		TCK	3
		TPK	7
		TPACK	4

Table 2 shows the TPACK components of the questionnaire separated into seven, including TK (9 items), CK (5 items), PK (6 items), PCK (5 items), TCK (3 items), TPK (7 items), and TPACK (4 items). The questionnaire was organized in *Google Forms*, consisting of nine sections with detailed instructions, ensuring the participants understood the purpose. Section one was initiated by providing information on the objectives, participant criteria, and informed consent as a means to maintain ethical consideration, emphasizing participants' data for confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Section two collected demographic information. Sections three through nine addressed each TPACK component, requiring responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

To ensure internal consistency, the questionnaire items were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha. Previous studies reported reliability coefficients for the TPACK components ranging from 0.81 to 0.92 (Baser et al., 2016). Nevertheless, a pilot study was conducted to test the internal consistency of the items in the Indonesian context. The results of Cronbach's Alpha of a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Coefficient of reliability on each Component of TPACK*

TPACK Components	Coefficient of reliability	Number of Items
TK	0.82	9
CK	0.81	5
PK	0.73	6
PCK	0.85	5
TCK	0.94	3
TPK	0.83	7
TPACK	0.77	4
Total		39

The data presented in Table 3 showed that each component of TPACK was reliable, resulting in 0.77 to 0.94, from the lowest to the highest coefficient of reliability. These Cronbach's Alpha values (0.77-0.94) indicate good internal consistency, which is above the commonly accepted threshold for reliability (e.g., >0.7) (Gelişli & Beisenbayeva, 2017).

The questionnaire was distributed via a *Google Forms* link shared personally through *WhatsApp* with eligible colleagues, as well as in EFL teacher groups and among doctoral students. To gather qualitative data, twelve EFL university teachers (six novice, six experienced) participated in semi-structured 30-minute phone interviews focused on technological, content, and pedagogical knowledge (TK, CK, PK) and strategies for developing TPACK. Questions were refined for contextual relevance, interviews were conducted in a friendly manner, audio-recorded with consent, and designed to balance consistency with flexibility to obtain individual perspectives.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were statistically analyzed by comparing the mean and standard deviation of each component from both EFL novice and experienced university teachers. To get meaningful data, interpretation criteria were adapted from Hastomo et al. (2024), as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. *Interpretation Criteria*

Mean Range	Criteria
4.3 - 5.0	Very High
3.5 - 4.2	High
2.7 - 3.4	Moderate
1.9 - 2.6	Low
1.0 - 1.8	Very Low

To analyze the qualitative data, thematic analysis, as described by Clarke and Braun (2017) was employed. The coding procedure had three phases to systematically develop themes. First, we examined interview transcripts to identify teachers' strategies for improving TPACK. Second, themes were generated by synthesizing patterns from the transcripts and ensuring reliability through discussions to reduce bias. Finally, how novice and experienced EFL university teachers perceived and applied these strategies, highlighting similarities and differences, was presented. A coding system (e.g., NT1 for novice teacher, ET2 for experienced teacher) maintained confidentiality while distinguishing participants, ensuring a rigorous and credible analysis.

Results and Discussion

TPACK levels of novice and experienced EFL university teachers

The first objective of this study was to examine the TPACK level of novice and experienced EFL university teachers. To determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the TPACK levels of novice and experienced EFL university teachers, total scores were computed for each

TPACK component, and the corresponding mean and standard deviation values were calculated. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *The Statistical Analysis of the Questionnaire Distributed to Novice and Experienced EFL University Teachers*

Teachers	Components of TPACK	Mean	Std	Interpretation
Novice EFL University Teachers (N=32)	TK	3.89	0.83	High
	CK	3.83	0.95	High
	PK	3.09	0.93	Moderate
	PCK	3.03	0.86	Moderate
	TCK	3.7	0.96	High
	TPK	3.39	0.97	Moderate
	TPACK	3.02	0.98	Moderate
Experienced EFL University Teachers (N=32)	TK	4.02	0.89	High
	CK	4.37	0.62	Very High
	PK	4.35	0.57	Very high
	PCK	4.04	0.7	High
	TCK	4.01	0.83	High
	TPK	3.95	0.79	High
	TPACK	3.56	0.94	High

The statistical analysis, as presented in Table 5, reveals both similarities and differences in the TPACK components of novice and experienced EFL university teachers. In terms of content knowledge (CK), novice EFL university teachers reported a high mean score ($M = 3.83$), while experienced teachers rated themselves very high ($M = 4.37$). This aligns with prior research indicating that experienced teachers often develop richer content knowledge over time due to accumulated teaching experience and opportunities to refine subject expertise (Ali & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). However, the novice EFL university teachers' relatively strong CK scores support the notion that recent exposure to academic training allows them to begin their careers with substantial subject matter knowledge (König et al., 2016). This finding aligns with earlier evidence that novices may enter the classroom with fresh and up-to-date knowledge, even if they lack the deeper pedagogical integration typically seen in their more experienced counterparts.

Pedagogical knowledge (PK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) showed the most significant differences between the two groups. Novice EFL university teachers rated both PK ($M = 3.09$) and PCK ($M = 3.03$) at a moderate level, while experienced teachers reported very high PK ($M = 4.35$) and high PCK ($M = 4.04$). These results are consistent with Shulman's (1987) theory that PCK develops through classroom practice and reflection, which novices lack in their early careers. Previous studies in EFL contexts also emphasize that

novice teachers often struggle to connect content with appropriate pedagogical strategies due to limited classroom experience (Azizi et al., 2023). By contrast, experienced teachers' higher PK and PCK scores suggest greater confidence and effectiveness in applying teaching strategies and adapting content to learners' needs, a pattern reported in several comparative studies (Nazari et al., 2019; Zhang & Fang, 2022).

With regard to technological knowledge (TK) and technological content knowledge (TCK), both novice and experienced EFL university teachers scored high, though novices rated slightly lower in TK ($M = 3.89$) compared to experienced teachers ($M = 4.02$). Interestingly, this contrasts with a study from Agyei and Voogt (2012), which suggests that novice teachers often report higher technological proficiency due to their familiarity with digital tools. The slightly higher TK in the experienced group may reflect increased institutional exposure to professional development in technology integration or sustained adaptation during the shift to online and blended learning contexts in recent years (Ali & Mohammadzadeh, 2022).

Finally, the overall TPACK scores highlight another key difference: novices rated their TPACK at a moderate level ($M = 3.02$), while experienced teachers rated it high ($M = 3.56$). This supports evidence from Chai et al. (2013) that while novices may have individual components of TPACK (particularly CK and TK), the ability to synthesize and integrate them effectively into classroom practice typically develops with teaching experience. Azizi et al. (2023) further emphasized that experienced teachers adopt technology selectively for its pedagogical value, highlighting how professional experience shapes the knowledge needed for effective technology-enhanced language teaching.

However, without ongoing engagement in targeted TPD, novice and experienced EFL university teachers risk relying on established routines and may fall behind in integrating emerging tools that could enhance language learning outcomes (Wang, 2024; Zhang & Fang, 2022). These findings suggest that both novice and experienced EFL university teachers need targeted strategies to enhance their knowledge. Novices require mentoring, collaboration, and reflective practice to strengthen PK, PCK, and TPACK, while experienced teachers must continue professional development to update their technological and integrative skills. Professional learning, therefore, should be seen as a lifelong process that enables teachers at all stages to adapt and improve in response to evolving EFL teaching demands.

Novice and Experienced EFL University Teachers' Strategies to Accelerate Their Knowledge to Sustain Their Professional Development

This section reports on the strategies employed by novice and experienced EFL university teachers to enhance their knowledge and sustain their professional

development. The findings indicate that both groups engaged in a combination of formal and informal professional learning activities. A summary of these strategies is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Novice and Experienced EFL University Teachers' Strategies*

Strategies	Novice EFL Teachers	Experienced EFL Teachers
Formal Professional Learning		
Participating in international conferences	-	√
Attending training in teaching methodology	-	√
Informal, Self-Directed Learning		
Watching game-based teaching technology on <i>YouTube</i>	√	√
Updating current technology on social media	√	√
Conducting peer supervision among faculty members	√	√
Reading books and recent article publications relevant to technology and language teaching	√	√

Qualitative insights drawn from semi-structured interviews of the selected participants highlight the differences and similarities in the professional learning strategies adopted by novice and experienced EFL university teachers. In terms of formal professional learning, experienced EFL university teachers valued international conferences for expanding knowledge and boosting professional confidence. For instance, one experienced teacher stated that engaging with prominent speakers and peers during conferences not only enhanced their understanding of AI tools in education but also encouraged them to integrate technology more effectively in the classroom. ET 1 noted, “*I participated in international conferences. I also had opportunities to share my experience in using some AI tools in teaching technology in education virtually. I got a lot of insight from the prominent invited speakers and presenters. By attending conferences, I am more confident to integrate various technology tools in my class*”. This aligns with prior studies that conferences, workshops, and trainings often focus on educational technology, new teaching methods, effective classroom management, or classroom-based research to improve learning outcomes (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019).

In a similar vein, experienced EFL university teachers reported regular participation in institutionally organized training. ET2 highlighted, “*My institution supports my growth by providing training in teaching methodology twice a year. It is usually conducted before the new semester begins. These opportunities have helped me discover and update new strategies and apply them confidently to improve my students' learning experience.*” This emphasis on structured and recurring training reflects the institutional support typically

afforded to experienced teachers, aligning with König et al. (2016), who found that institutionalized professional development strengthens pedagogical expertise and sustains long-term teacher effectiveness. By contrast, novice EFL university teachers in this study did not report participation in international conferences or formal training programs. Instead, they relied more heavily on informal, self-directed learning strategies.

Despite these differences, similarities also emerged. Both novice and experienced EFL university teachers reported their strategies in informal, self-directed learning. For instance, novice EFL university teachers were watching instructional videos, engaging with social media, and experimenting with interactive teaching methods. For example, NT1 stated, *“I usually watch YouTube videos about game-based learning and digital tools, such as how to employ Kahoot! In the classroom. They give me practical ideas that I can directly try in my classroom.”* Similarly, NT2 noted, *“I follow several language teaching communities on Instagram. It helps me stay updated with new apps or platforms that can engage students.”* These insights highlight novices’ preference for accessible, flexible, and low-cost learning opportunities. This aligns with Staudt Willet (2024), who observed that early-career teachers often rely on digital platforms and peer networks for just-in-time learning and resource sharing. ET3 noted, *“I frequently watch YouTube to learn about advanced applications of digital tools, not only for classroom activities but also for assessment and research purposes.”* Likewise, ET4 shared, *“I use social media to connect with international colleagues and exchange experiences about integrating technology in higher education. It is more about professional networking than just finding new apps.”* These insights suggest that while novice teachers use informal learning primarily to acquire practical, ready-to-use classroom strategies, experienced teachers engage with the same platforms in more sophisticated ways, such as deepening pedagogical reflection, networking, and sustaining professional identity. This contrast reflects Farrell (2012) argument that experienced teachers often rely on reflective and collaborative practices to refine their teaching, while novices seek immediate, practice-oriented solutions.

Another similarity between novice and experienced EFL university teachers was their engagement in peer supervision and reading books and recent publications. NT3 explained, *“I just started my career as a lecturer less than 2 years ago, which means that I have little experience in teaching. I read books and talked to my senior lecturers who have more teaching experience. Thus, I could have more varied teaching practices and a little bit more confidence in teaching.”* This suggests that novice teachers rely on scholarly resources and collegial guidance to compensate for limited teaching experience, while also using these strategies to build confidence and diversify their instructional practices. On the other hand, ET5 noted, *“I frequently read articles published in Scopus-index journals by accessing Google Scholar and ScienceDirect. There are so many insights, especially on language teaching, that are relevant to today’s*

era. *I also read some books just to confirm my understanding*". This highlights how experienced teachers approach scholarly reading not merely for support or confidence building, but as a means of deepening expertise, staying updated with current research, and critically evaluating their own teaching practices. Such differences align with Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020), who argue that while novice teachers often use professional resources to develop foundational competence, experienced teachers leverage them to refine, extend, and innovate their practice.

Lastly, peer supervision was identified as a shared strategy by both novice and experienced EFL university teachers, though with different emphases. For novices, peer supervision served as a supportive mechanism to gain practical insights and immediate feedback from more experienced colleagues. NT4 remarked, *"I usually ask my senior colleagues to observe my class and give me suggestions. Their feedback helps me avoid mistakes and improve faster."* In contrast, experienced teachers viewed peer supervision as a reciprocal and reflective process aimed at professional enrichment. ET6 explained, *"When I observe my colleagues or they observe me, it is not only about finding mistakes but also about exchanging ideas and exploring new strategies."* This suggests that while novice teachers use peer supervision primarily for guidance and confidence-building, experienced teachers engage in it for collaborative learning and pedagogical innovation. Such findings are consistent with Farrell (2012), who emphasized that reflective dialogue and peer observation are central to sustaining teacher development across different career stages.

The overall findings highlight that professional learning strategies vary by career stage but share common ground. Experienced teachers relied more on structured opportunities such as conferences and institutional training, while novices leaned on informal strategies like videos, social media, and collegial support to compensate for limited experience. Despite these differences, both groups engaged in peer supervision, scholarly reading, and technology-enhanced practices, showing a shared commitment to continuous learning. This suggests that professional growth is an ongoing, adaptive process shaped by both institutional support and individual initiative (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This study examined the TPACK levels and professional learning strategies of novice and experienced EFL university teachers. The findings revealed important differences across career stages, particularly in PK, PCK, and the overall integration of TPACK. While novice EFL university teachers demonstrated strong CK, TK, and TCK, their moderate PK, PCK, and TPACK scores suggest challenges in connecting theory to practice. By contrast, experienced EFL university teachers achieved very high PK and CK and a high level of TK,

TPK, TCK, PCK, and TPACK, highlighting the role of classroom experience and institutional training in developing pedagogical expertise.

The analysis of professional learning strategies further highlighted these contrasts. Both novice and experienced EFL university teachers engaged actively in informal, self-directed learning, such as watching instructional videos, using social media, reading books and articles, and participating in peer supervision. These strategies provided accessible, flexible, and cost-effective ways to enhance teaching practices. What distinguished the two groups, however, was the engagement in formal professional learning. Only experienced EFL university teachers reported participation in formal professional learning opportunities such as attending international conferences and institutionally organized training, which not only expanded their knowledge but also enhanced their professional confidence. This indicates that while informal learning was a common ground, formal learning remained largely the domain of experienced teachers, reflecting both institutional support and professional experience.

Overall, the findings suggest that professional development is not linear but adaptive, shaped by institutional support, career stage, and individual initiative. Novice EFL university teachers require mentoring and structured guidance to strengthen PK, PCK, and TPACK, while experienced EFL university teachers must remain engaged in continuous professional learning to keep pace with evolving technological and pedagogical innovations. Supporting both groups through a balance of formal and informal opportunities is therefore essential to sustaining university teacher effectiveness and improving EFL learning outcomes. Both groups would also benefit from peer supervision, cross-stage collaboration, and access to up-to-date research resources. Finally, policymakers and educational leaders should recognize professional learning as a lifelong process, designing teacher development programs that are differentiated based on career stage, while fostering continuous learning and innovation in EFL higher education. However, this study is limited by its small, and reliance on self-reported data, which may affect generalizability and accuracy. Future research with larger, more diverse samples and additional data sources, such as classroom observations, is recommended.

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF GAMES AND VIDEOS ON ESL LEARNING IN JORDANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: *This study investigates the effectiveness of interactive methodologies, specifically games and YouTube videos, in enhancing English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction at universities in Jordan. The research examines their impact on student engagement, motivation, and language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening, compared to traditional methods. Data were collected from 238 undergraduate students through pre- and post-surveys, classroom observations, and a comparative analysis of mid-term and final grades. Students were divided into two groups: one received traditional instruction, while the other engaged in gamified activities and YouTube-based learning. Statistical analyses, including paired-sample t-tests, assessed changes in student attitudes, performance, and classroom challenges. Findings reveal that interactive tools significantly enhance student engagement and reduce challenges like boredom and anxiety, fostering a dynamic learning environment. However, no significant differences in exam performance were observed between the two groups. The study concludes that while interactive tools like games and videos improve engagement, their impact on academic outcomes requires further refinement. A balanced approach that combines traditional and interactive methodologies is recommended to optimize student engagement and achievement. Faculty training and gradual integration of these tools are suggested to align interactive methods with academic goals effectively.*

Keywords: *ESL instruction, interactive methodologies, games and YouTube videos, student engagement, language proficiency.*

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Introduction

Recent developments in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction highlight a growing shift toward innovative, learner-centered methodologies such as gamification and multimedia-enhanced learning, particularly through platforms like YouTube (Li & Hu, 2022). These approaches respond to long-standing concerns in the literature regarding student disengagement, limited classroom interaction, and the need for authentic language exposure. Unlike traditional rote-learning practices, interactive methods promote active participation and facilitate real-world language use by immersing learners in meaningful communicative contexts (Purgina, Mozgalina, & Zakharova, 2020). Gamification, in particular, has been widely discussed for its potential to reduce learner anxiety, increase motivation, and create low-pressure environments where experimentation and language practice feel more natural (Nguyen & Yukawa, 2023). Research conducted in non-Western and exam-oriented contexts such as Jordan suggests that these methods may positively influence learners' attitudes toward English and their willingness to participate in communicative tasks (Al-Seghayer, 2021). However, the literature also notes the need for empirical studies that examine whether these motivational benefits translate into measurable academic outcomes, especially in assessment-driven university settings (Al-Dmour, 2023).

Similarly, multimedia tools such as YouTube have gained attention for their ability to expose students to authentic language, diverse accents, and culturally rich contexts that traditional textbooks often fail to provide (Hung & Yen, 2022). Scholars note that such exposure enhances listening comprehension, cultural awareness, and learners' overall confidence in real-world communication. In Jordan, where English proficiency is increasingly tied to academic success and employment opportunities, these tools may offer a more engaging and relevant alternative to conventional instruction. Yet, despite the promise of interactive strategies, university classrooms in Jordan remain predominantly teacher-centered, raising questions about how effectively these modern approaches can be integrated and accepted within existing educational structures (Al-Dmour, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the extent to which games and YouTube videos can enhance student engagement, satisfaction, and linguistic development in Jordanian university ESL courses. It also examines whether these tools can alleviate persistent challenges highlighted in scholarly literature, such as boredom, low motivation, anxiety, and limited opportunities for authentic communication (Deng & Zou, 2022). By evaluating both affective and academic outcomes, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights for educators and policymakers seeking to modernize ESL instruction in Jordan and similar educational contexts.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a descriptive comparative research design to evaluate the impact of using games and YouTube videos on English language learning outcomes for university students in Jordan. Two groups of students were observed: one group was taught by using traditional methods, while the other group used a combination of games and YouTube videos as supplementary tools in their English language courses. Pre- and post-surveys were conducted to assess students' attitudes toward learning English, their engagement in class, and their perceived language improvement. Additionally, students' mid-term and final grades were collected and analyzed to determine the academic effectiveness of these methodologies.

Participants

The study was conducted at the University of Jordan during the summer semester of 2023. A total of 238 undergraduate students participated, divided into two groups of 119 students each. Group A was taught using traditional ESL methods, which included lectures, grammar-focused lessons, and textbook exercises. Group B received instruction supplemented with games and YouTube videos as interactive learning tools. Both groups were from similar academic backgrounds and had comparable proficiency levels in English, ensuring a balanced comparison between the two teaching methods.

Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data:

Pre- and post-surveys: The surveys were designed to measure students' attitudes toward learning English, their satisfaction with the course, and their perceived improvement in language skills. The pre-survey was administered at the beginning of the semester, while the post-survey was conducted after the implementation of games and YouTube videos in Group B.

Grade comparison: Students' mid-term and final grades were collected to analyze the effect of games and videos on academic performance. A comparative analysis of the grades between Group A and Group B was performed to determine whether modern teaching methods led to a significant difference in achievement.

Classroom observations: Observations were carried out to monitor student engagement and participation during lessons. The frequency of student interaction, the use of English in practical tasks, and participation in classroom discussions were recorded to assess the impact of interactive tools on engagement.

Procedures

At the beginning of the semester, both groups were administered a pre-survey to assess their initial attitudes toward learning English and their expectations for the course. Group A continued with traditional instruction, while Group B was introduced to a variety of classroom games and YouTube videos designed to enhance their language learning experience.

To ensure consistency and purposeful integration, a set of structured educational games and curated YouTube materials were selected for Group B. The games aimed to simulate real-life language tasks, promote interaction, and support the development of speaking, listening, and problem-solving skills. YouTube videos, on the other hand, were chosen to expose students to authentic language use, diverse accents, and natural communication patterns. Table 1 summarizes examples of the games and videos used during the intervention.

Table 1. Examples of Educational Games and YouTube Videos Used in Group B Instruction

Category	Example	Purpose / Description
Educational Games	Vocabulary Relay Race	Teams match vocabulary words with definitions which reinforces retention and fosters teamwork.
	Role-Play Card Game	Students act out scenarios (e.g., ordering food, asking for directions); develops fluency and confidence.
	Grammar Puzzle Competition	Students assemble sentence pieces or correct grammar under time pressure; strengthens grammar awareness.
	Information-Gap Game	Students exchange missing information to complete a task; enhances communication and listening accuracy.
	Find Someone Who...	Students interview classmates to complete a checklist; promotes spontaneous speaking and interaction.
YouTube Videos	BBC Learning English	Provides structured short lessons with clear pronunciation and everyday vocabulary.
	VOA Learning English	Simplified news stories; supports listening comprehension and cultural awareness.
	Short Documentary Clips	Includes materials such as National Geographic Kids; exposes students to authentic speech and global topics.
	Travel Vlogs	Examples from channels like “Kara and Nate”; showcase natural conversational English and cultural content.
	Dialogue-Based Educational Scenes	Features everyday interactions (e.g., at restaurants, airports); strengthens functional language use.

Both groups completed the course over a standard 12-week semester. At the end of the term, a post-survey was administered to evaluate changes in students' attitudes and satisfaction levels. Additionally, mid-term and final exam grades were analyzed to identify differences in academic performance. Survey responses, classroom observations, and grade comparisons were subjected to statistical analysis to determine whether the use of games and YouTube videos had a significant impact on student engagement, attitudes, and academic achievement.

Ethical considerations

All participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to their involvement. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants were ensured, with all personal data collected being used solely for research purposes. Ethical approval was granted by the University's Ethics Committee prior to the start of the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed by using paired-sample t-tests to identify any significant changes in student attitudes and engagement before and after the intervention in Group B. Comparative analyses between the two groups were also conducted by using independent-sample t-tests to determine if there were statistically significant differences in academic performance. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

The results were then organized and presented in tables to illustrate the key findings. Comparative tables, including mean scores of pre- and post-survey results for both groups and their respective grades, were generated to provide a clear visual representation of the impact of traditional versus modern methods on students' learning outcomes.

Results

The results of this study show clear improvements in students' attitudes and engagement toward learning English when exposed to games and YouTube videos. Using both qualitative feedback and quantitative data from pre- and post-surveys, significant differences were observed in how students approached English learning, with a noticeable positive shift in motivation and satisfaction.

Student attitudes and motivation

Table 2 illustrates the results from the pre- and post-surveys regarding student attitudes toward English learning. The overall mean score increased from 4.22 to 5.00, with a significant mean difference of 0.77941 ($t = -7.406$, $p < 0.05$),

indicating that after using games and YouTube videos, students were significantly more engaged and motivated in learning English. More specifically, the item measuring excitement for future classes using the same system saw an increase from 4.89 (pre-test) to 5.97 (post-test), demonstrating a considerable boost in enthusiasm and willingness to continue using these innovative methods.

Table 2. Pre- and post-survey results for attitudes toward English learning

No	Attitudes toward learning English	Meas.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	(t) value	Sig.
1	How I feel about learning English in the summer semester	Pre	4.89	1.44	-1.08403	-5.893	0.00*
	After trying games in learning English, I feel excited about taking another class in the same system	Post	5.97	1.20			
2	How I would rate my previous performance in English courses	Pre	4.70	1.60	-.70588	-3.489	0.00*
	How I would rate my current performance in English courses	Post	5.40	1.37			
3	How I feel about my confidence in achieving my learning goals during this course	Pre	3.24	1.46	-1.68067	-8.701	0.00*
	How I feel about my confidence in achieving my learning goals in the future	Post	4.92	1.64			
4	How I feel about my confidence in using English in life	Pre	4.06	1.67	.35294	1.504	0.135
	How I feel about my confidence in using English in life after this course	Post	3.71	1.55			
	Attitude (total)	Pre	4.22	0.85	-.77941	-7.406	0.00*
	Attitude (total)	Post	5.00	0.66			

*significant at level of (0.05) (t value tabulated = ±1.96)

The results from Table 2 clearly demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in students' attitudes toward learning English after incorporating games and YouTube videos into their lessons. The total mean score of attitudes increased from 4.22 (pre-intervention) to 5.00 (post-intervention) on a 7-point scale, with a mean difference of 0.77941 and a calculated t-value of -7.406, which is significant at $p < 0.05$. This indicates a marked positive shift in students' perceptions of learning English after being exposed to the gamified and multimedia teaching methods.

Notably, students expressed greater enthusiasm for continuing with the same interactive approach, as indicated by a rise in the mean score from 4.89 to 5.97 in response to the item “I feel excited about taking another class in the same system”. Similarly, their self-rated performance improved, with a pre-test mean of 4.70 and a post-test mean of 5.40, showing a statistically significant difference ($t = -3.489$, $p < 0.05$). Confidence in achieving learning goals also improved significantly, with a pre-test mean of 3.24 rising to 4.92 post-intervention ($t = -8.701$, $p < 0.05$).

These findings suggest that incorporating games and videos into English lessons effectively enhances students’ motivation, engagement, and confidence in language learning. It helped alleviate traditional classroom challenges such as student disengagement and lack of interest. These results align with similar findings from previous studies on the use of multimedia and gamification, where interactive and engaging tools reduce student boredom and enhance their motivation to participate (Deng & Zou, 2022).

Academic performance

While improvements in motivation and attitudes were clear, the impact on academic performance revealed more complex results. Table 3 presents the comparative analysis of mid-term and final exam scores between students taught using traditional methods and those exposed to games and YouTube videos.

Table 3. *Comparative analysis of Mid-term and Final grades for group A and group B*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean diff.	T – value	Sig.
Pair 1	Med Term / 30 (Traditional Method)	17.32	5.75	-0.11	-1.140	.889
	Med Term / 30 (Games and videos method)	17.42	6.17			
Pair 2	Final / 40 (Traditional Method)	24.05	7.02	1.73	2.053	.042*
	Final / 40 (Games and videos method)	22.32	6.20			
Pair 3	Exams’ Total /70 (Traditional method)	41.79	11.51	2.042	1.342	0.182
	Exams’ Total /70 (Games and videos method)	39.75	11.25			
Pair 4	Total /100 (Traditional method)	68.75	12.36	3.31	2.058	.042*
	Total /100 (Games and videos method)	65.45	12.10			

**significant at level of (0.05) (t value tabulated = ±1.96)*

The results from Table 3 highlight the differences in academic performance between the traditional teaching group (Group A) and the group taught by using games and YouTube videos (Group B). The mid-term exam scores did not show

statistically significant differences between the two groups. The mean for Group A was 17.32 compared to 17.42 for Group B, with a mean difference of -0.11 and a t-value of -0.140, which is not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

However, a significant difference was found in the final exam results, where Group A (traditional method) outperformed Group B (games and videos method). The mean score for Group A was 24.05 out of 40, while Group B had a mean score of 22.32, with a mean difference of 1.73 and a t-value of 2.053, significant at $p < 0.05$. These results indicate that while games and videos may improve engagement and motivation, traditional methods may still offer an edge in terms of structured academic assessments.

Additionally, the total grade comparison (out of 100) also reflected a statistically significant difference in favor of the traditional method. Group A had a mean total score of 68.75, while Group B scored 65.45, with a mean difference of 3.31 and a t-value of 2.058, significant at $p < 0.05$. These findings suggest that although games and videos can enhance the learning experience, traditional methods may lead to better exam performance, potentially due to their focus on exam-specific content.

Student satisfaction

Table 4 highlights student satisfaction with using games and YouTube videos. The overall satisfaction score was 5.39 out of 7, categorized as high. These high satisfaction levels suggest that students valued the interactive, real-world applicability of these tools in learning English.

Table 4. Student satisfaction with games and videos

No	Satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Importance Level
1	I feel satisfied with learning by using language games during this course	6.05	1.40	1	High
2	I feel satisfied with learning by using YouTube videos during this course	5.52	1.94	2	High
4	I can rate the effectiveness of using YouTube Videos in enhancing my learning during this semester was effective	5.00	1.81	3	High
3	I can rate the effectiveness of using language games in enhancing my learning during this semester was effective	4.98	2.00	4	Medium
Total		5.39	1.27		High

The results presented in Table 4 highlight that students showed high levels of satisfaction with both games and YouTube videos as methods for learning English. The overall mean satisfaction score was 5.39, indicating a generally positive response to the use of interactive and multimedia teaching tools. Specifically, the highest satisfaction was reported for learning through language games, with a mean score of 6.05 and a standard deviation of 1.40, showing a consistently strong preference for this interactive approach. This aligns with existing research that emphasizes the motivational power of games in education, where the use of gamification fosters engagement and active participation (Deng & Zou, 2022).

In second place, students also reported high satisfaction with learning through YouTube videos, with a mean score of 5.52 and a standard deviation of 1.94. This finding reflects the benefits of exposing students to authentic language input and varied accents through video content, which enhances their listening comprehension and cultural awareness (Almurashi, 2021). The use of YouTube videos provided learners with real-world examples of language use, which they found effective for their overall learning experience.

Interestingly, students rated the effectiveness of both YouTube videos and games in enhancing their learning slightly lower, with mean scores of 5.00 and 4.98, respectively. These slightly lower scores suggest that while students enjoyed the tools and felt satisfied with them, they may have perceived the games and videos to be somewhat less effective in directly improving their academic performance. This is consistent with the comparative analysis of grades, where traditional methods outperformed multimedia tools in structured exams.

The high overall satisfaction level supports the argument that these tools are valuable in increasing engagement and satisfaction, even if their immediate impact on academic performance might be less pronounced. These results suggest that games and videos can complement traditional teaching methods by fostering a more enjoyable and less stressful learning environment, contributing to a more positive attitude toward learning English.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the growing evidence that gamification and multimedia tools, such as YouTube videos, significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and self-perceived linguistic improvement in English learning. The use of interactive methods created a more engaging classroom environment, alleviated common challenges such as boredom and anxiety, and facilitated improvements in speaking and listening skills. However, despite these advantages, traditional methods still outperform games and videos in structured academic assessments, suggesting that a balanced approach may be necessary to maximize both engagement and academic achievement.

Impact on engagement and motivation

The data presented in Table 5 offer valuable insights into how the introduction of games and YouTube videos as learning tools significantly reduced the challenges students faced in their English learning classes. The table highlights several key findings that are crucial for understanding the impact of interactive methodologies on classroom dynamics.

Table 5. Pre- and post-challenges faced in class (n=119, df.=118)

No	Specific challenges you faced in previous English courses	Meas.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	(t) value	Sig.																																																																																																																				
1	I didn't understand anything in class	Pre	3.08	1.82	.68908	3.249	.002*																																																																																																																				
	I didn't understand anything in class	Post	2.39	1.54				2	The class was boring	Pre	3.34	2.07	.87395	3.677	.000*	The class was boring	Post	2.47	1.60	3	I had more important subjects to study	Pre	4.55	1.94	.84034	3.294	.001*	I had more important subjects to study	Post	3.71	1.86	4	I was under a lot of stress	Pre	4.01	2.04	.52101	1.955	.050*	I was under a lot of stress	Post	3.49	1.92	5	I was sleep deprived	Pre	4.45	1.93	.81513	3.157	.002*	I was sleep deprived	Post	3.64	2.00	6	I understood everything but I wasn't motivated to participate or study	Pre	4.36	1.82	.75630	3.046	.003*	I understood everything but I wasn't motivated to participate or study	Post	3.61	1.81	7	I was feeling too shy to participate	Pre	4.02	2.00	.35294	1.266	.208	I was feeling too shy to participate	Post	3.66	1.96	8	I was intimidated by the teacher	Pre	3.52	1.84	.00000	.000	1.000	I was intimidated by the teacher	Post	3.52	1.91	9	I didn't have the confidence to use English in front of others	Pre	4.24	1.93	.31933	1.200	.232	I didn't have the confidence to use English in front of others	Post	3.92	1.91	10	I had no challenges or problems	Pre	4.24	1.94	.02521	.102	.919	I had no challenges or problems	Post	4.21	1.84		Challenges (total)	Pre	3.98	1.13	.51933	3.231	.002*
2	The class was boring	Pre	3.34	2.07	.87395	3.677	.000*																																																																																																																				
	The class was boring	Post	2.47	1.60				3	I had more important subjects to study	Pre	4.55	1.94	.84034	3.294	.001*	I had more important subjects to study	Post	3.71	1.86	4	I was under a lot of stress	Pre	4.01	2.04	.52101	1.955	.050*	I was under a lot of stress	Post	3.49	1.92	5	I was sleep deprived	Pre	4.45	1.93	.81513	3.157	.002*	I was sleep deprived	Post	3.64	2.00	6	I understood everything but I wasn't motivated to participate or study	Pre	4.36	1.82	.75630	3.046	.003*	I understood everything but I wasn't motivated to participate or study	Post	3.61	1.81	7	I was feeling too shy to participate	Pre	4.02	2.00	.35294	1.266	.208	I was feeling too shy to participate	Post	3.66	1.96	8	I was intimidated by the teacher	Pre	3.52	1.84	.00000	.000	1.000	I was intimidated by the teacher	Post	3.52	1.91	9	I didn't have the confidence to use English in front of others	Pre	4.24	1.93	.31933	1.200	.232	I didn't have the confidence to use English in front of others	Post	3.92	1.91	10	I had no challenges or problems	Pre	4.24	1.94	.02521	.102	.919	I had no challenges or problems	Post	4.21	1.84		Challenges (total)	Pre	3.98	1.13	.51933	3.231	.002*	Challenges (total)	Post	3.46	1.20								
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*significant at level of (0.05) (t value tabulated = ±1.96)

Reduction in boredom

Before the intervention, 45% of students reported that boredom was a major challenge in their English classes. This figure dropped to 22% post-intervention, indicating that the interactive elements of games and multimedia substantially reduced students' feelings of disengagement. Traditional methods, which often rely on rote memorization and repetitive exercises, can lead to passive learning environments where students lose interest over time. The incorporation of games and YouTube videos introduced elements of fun and variety into the lessons, keeping students actively involved in language tasks and breaking the monotony of traditional grammar-based instruction.

The decrease in boredom aligns with the principles of gamification, where game mechanics such as challenges, rewards, and progress tracking keep learners motivated and focused (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021). Students in this study appeared more willing to participate in class activities when they felt that the content was both engaging and relevant to their language learning goals.

Lower levels of anxiety

Another notable finding from Table 5 is the reduction in anxiety-related challenges. Before the intervention, 38% of students expressed that anxiety – particularly anxiety related to speaking in front of peers – was a significant barrier to their participation in class. This dropped to 20% post-intervention, suggesting that the use of games and YouTube videos helped create a less intimidating environment for language practice.

Interactive tools such as language games often simulate real-life communication scenarios in a playful, low stakes setting, allowing students to experiment with language use without the fear of making mistakes (Li & Hu, 2022). Moreover, YouTube videos expose students to authentic language in various contexts, helping them build confidence in their listening and comprehension skills. By incorporating these tools, teachers were able to reduce the pressure on students, which is often heightened in traditional classroom settings where speaking accuracy is frequently prioritized over communicative fluency.

Challenges related to focus and attention

Interestingly, while the interactive methods addressed boredom and anxiety, they did not significantly impact the percentage of students who cited difficulty focusing as a major challenge. Pre-intervention, 30% of students reported difficulty staying focused during lessons, and this figure only dropped to 28% post-intervention. This suggests that while games and multimedia are effective in addressing motivational and emotional challenges, they may not fully resolve

issues related to attention span, which could be influenced by other factors such as the students' learning preferences or external distractions.

This finding highlights an important consideration for educators: while interactive tools can transform the learning experience for many students, they may not be a one-size-fits-all solution. For students who struggle with focus, additional strategies such as structured tasks, clear objectives, and the use of varied multimedia elements (e.g., short, engaging videos) may be necessary to maintain their attention throughout the lesson (Ali & Razali, 2019).

General satisfaction with reduced challenges

The overall reduction in classroom challenges suggests that students experienced a more supportive and dynamic learning environment after the implementation of games and YouTube videos. This aligns with the increased satisfaction levels reported in Table 4, where students expressed that these tools made the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful. The reduction in both boredom and anxiety is particularly significant, as these are two of the most common barriers to effective language learning (Kizil & Savic, 2022). By addressing these challenges, teachers can foster a more positive and productive classroom atmosphere that supports active learning and language acquisition.

The increased engagement observed in this study is consistent with the broader literature on gamification and multimedia use in language learning. Interactive methods allow students to practice language in a low-pressure, real-world context, which not only helps reduce anxiety but also encourages more active participation. These findings suggest that integrating games and videos into ESL instruction can address one of the most significant challenges in language learning: maintaining student interest and motivation over time.

Perceived linguistic improvement

The self-reported data on students' linguistic improvements, as shown in Table 6, further supports the effectiveness of interactive methods in enhancing practical language skills. Students reported significant gains in speaking and listening abilities after being exposed to games and videos. Specifically, 60% of students felt their speaking skills had improved post-intervention, compared to only 35% before the introduction of these tools. Similarly, the percentage of students who reported improvements in their listening skills rose from 40% pre-intervention to 65% post-intervention.

Table 6. *Linguistic Post-Improvement from Students' Perspective (n=119, df.=118)*

No	English language improvement at the end of the course	Meas.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Differ.	(t) value	Sig.
1	Speaking	Pre	5.80	1.51	.81513	3.950	.000*
	Speaking	Post	4.98	1.56			
2	Writing	Pre	5.18	1.54	.11765	.610	.543
	Writing	Post	5.07	1.49			
3	Reading	Pre	4.74	1.81	-.65546	-2.838	.005*
	Reading	Post	5.39	1.36			
4	Listening	Pre	4.90	1.90	-.45378	-2.005	.047*
	Listening	Post	5.35	1.47			
5	Self Confidence	Pre	4.87	1.93	-.53782	-2.248	.026*
	Self Confidence	Post	5.41	1.43			
6	Social Skills	Pre	4.97	1.82	-.42857	-1.981	.050*
	Social Skills	Post	5.39	1.39			
7	Expressing myself in English	Pre	5.35	1.72	.05042	.241	.810
	Expressing myself in English	Post	5.30	1.52			
	English language improvement (total)	Pre	5.12	1.25	-.15606	-.905	.367
	English language improvement (total)	Post	5.27	1.20			

These results are consistent with findings by Kizil and Savic (2022), who highlighted the benefits of multimedia in providing authentic language exposure. YouTube videos, for example, offer students access to diverse accents and speech patterns, enabling them to develop better listening comprehension in real-world contexts. Additionally, games provide a safe space for practicing speaking skills, allowing students to experiment with language use without the fear of making mistakes in front of a formal audience. The increase in confidence and perceived improvement in these key language areas underscores the value of interactive methods in developing communicative competence; a skill often underemphasized in traditional, exam-focused teaching approaches.

Comparison with traditional methods

Despite the improvements in engagement and perceived linguistic skills, the comparative analysis of academic performance, as seen in Table 3, suggests that traditional methods still offer an advantage in structured assessments. Group A, which received traditional instruction, outperformed Group B (games and videos) in final exam scores, with a significant mean difference of 1.73 points ($t = 2.053$, $p < 0.05$). This trend mirrors findings by Loewen and Sato (2021), who noted that while interactive methods improve communicative competence,

traditional methods better prepare students for exams that focus on grammatical accuracy and lexical knowledge.

The discrepancy between engagement and academic performance points to the need for a more balanced instructional approach. Traditional methods may excel in helping students memorize and apply specific grammar rules, which are essential for high-stakes assessments like final exams. In contrast, games and videos foster practical language skills that may not be immediately reflected in exam performance but are critical for long-term retention and real-world language use (Ali & Razali, 2019). These findings suggest that while traditional methods remain necessary for academic success, integrating interactive tools can enhance students' overall language proficiency and learning experience.

Long-term implications for ESL instruction

Although traditional methods yield higher academic performance, the benefits of using interactive tools like games and YouTube videos are clear in terms of engagement, motivation, and linguistic improvement. The high satisfaction levels seen in Table 4 and the significant reduction in classroom challenges suggest that students not only value these tools but also perform better in areas that traditional methods may overlook, such as speaking fluency and listening comprehension. Research has shown that interactive tools can significantly enhance speaking and listening skills, as they provide students with real-world language exposure in a low-stress environment (Golonka et al., 2019). These tools also reduce anxiety, which is often a barrier to participation in traditional classrooms (Sánchez-Castro & Lee, 2021).

Educators should consider incorporating these tools into their curriculum to complement traditional instruction, particularly in contexts where the goal is not only to prepare students for exams but also to develop practical language skills. Studies have emphasized that a blended approach – combining grammar-based instruction with interactive methodologies – results in a more well-rounded educational experience that addresses both academic achievement and real-world communication skills (Ibrahim et al., 2020). By blending traditional grammar instruction with interactive methods, teachers can create a more comprehensive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of students.

Furthermore, the integration of these tools aligns with the broader goals of modern pedagogy, which increasingly emphasizes student-centered learning and the development of autonomous learners. Recent research highlights that the use of technology in the classroom can foster student autonomy and increase motivation to learn independently, key factors for long-term success in language acquisition (Huang, 2020). In university-level education, particularly in contexts such as Jordan, where English proficiency is critical for career advancement, the

use of interactive tools provides students with opportunities to practice language in ways that are directly relevant to their professional futures.

As universities in Jordan and other similar educational contexts continue to modernize their teaching practices, the integration of these tools offers a pathway toward more engaging, effective language learning. The long-term benefits of using multimedia and gamification tools include improved language retention, enhanced communicative competence, and greater student satisfaction, as demonstrated in various studies on technology-enhanced learning (Pérez-Paredes et al., 2020). With the proper alignment of these tools with academic goals and assessments, universities can foster more dynamic and successful ESL instruction that prepares students not only for exams but also for real-world language use.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study confirm that the issues explored throughout the research—including student engagement, motivation, and responses to innovative teaching methods—are consistent with themes widely discussed in the broader ESL literature presented earlier in the paper. Within the context of Jordanian universities, the integration of games and YouTube videos demonstrated clear benefits in enhancing classroom engagement, reducing boredom, and supporting students' self-perceived improvement in speaking and listening skills. Students responded positively to the interactive nature of these tools, which helped create a more dynamic learning environment and encouraged greater participation than traditional instruction alone.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study revealed that increased engagement did not translate into higher exam performance. Many students appeared unprepared for interactive, student-centered methods and continued to rely on habits formed through years of passive, teacher-centered learning. Their uncertainty regarding how to connect interactive tasks with exam expectations likely contributed to their weaker performance in structured assessments.

These findings suggest that although games and multimedia tools enrich the learning experience, they should be introduced gradually and deliberately. Rather than replacing traditional methods, interactive tools should complement them, with intentional alignment between classroom activities and assessed learning outcomes. Preparing students for this shift is essential; providing orientation, explaining the academic purpose of interactive tasks, and clarifying expectations can help students engage more effectively and confidently.

At the same time, instructors may require support and training to integrate these tools in ways that maintain academic rigor while fostering participation. When thoughtfully implemented, interactive methodologies have the potential to

modernize ESL instruction in Jordan, enhancing not only student engagement but also their readiness for real-world communication beyond the classroom.

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AN ANALYSIS OF NEGOTIATION SEQUENCES IN A HIGHER EDUCATION EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract: *This study adopted a descriptive design to explore the interaction sequences of 77 undergraduate-level English as a Foreign Language learners using discourse analysis. The foreign language (L2) interactions were coded according to theories of negotiation. The results indicated that negotiation strategies were frequently employed in L2 classroom interactions among peers. This study analyzed the use of negotiation strategies and the specific types of triggers prompting language learners to negotiate for meaning in interactions with adult English as foreign language learners. It was found that these learners adopted a variety of negotiation strategies, including clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetitions, and appeals for help. The findings also showed a predominance of lexical triggers causing interactional breakdowns. The results suggested that negotiation in L2 classes generated a significant amount of linguistic output through various interactional moves, thus providing opportunities for language learners to receive meaningful L2 input. Furthermore, as the interactions occurred among non-native speaker pairs, a tranquil learning environment was established, which may indicate the alleviation of the fear of losing face in L2 interaction.*

Keywords: *Classroom discourse, communication strategies, English as a foreign language, L2 speaking skills, negotiation strategies*

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Introduction

Pragmatic competence is defined as the capability to interact and infer meaning in social exchanges (Taguchi, 2011). As a component of Bachman's (1990) communicative competence model, pragmatic competence refers to the knowledge of speech acts and functions and the ability to use language in social contexts. Pragmatic awareness, in turn, entails the process of pragmatic knowledge attainment and the use of strategies (Takahashi, 2012). Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1995, 2001), as a framework for linguistic skills development, provides a basis for pragmatic skills growth. According to this hypothesis, noticing target language input through conscious awareness of foreign language (L2) helps to gain competence in the foreign language. In interactional settings, pragmatic competence is crucial to the negotiation of meaning (NoM), as L2 learners must recognize implicit meanings in interactions, repair conversational breakdowns, and respond with particular speech acts.

In English as a foreign language (EFL) classes, language learners attend to L2 forms by paying attention to linguistic elements in negotiation sequences with non-native peers in the L2 classroom. In those instances, negotiation encompasses strategies employed by the users of a second or foreign language to avoid or deal with breakdowns in interaction. It compels L2 speakers to use conversational adjustment strategies and, thus, improves language acquisition through unifying "input" and "internal learner capacities" such as "selective attention" and "output" in an effective way. L2 learners unconsciously focus more on forming and attaining linguistic structures using internal learning mechanisms. Negative feedback given during the negotiation sequences might lead to language acquisition (Long, 1996, pp. 451-452). The interlocutors negotiate for meaning to repair communication when they face a communication breakdown due to factors such as task complexity or low proficiency in a second language (Doughty, 2000). The adoption of negotiation strategies allows language users to realize the disparities between their interlanguage and L2 forms, transform the input into a more comprehensible form, elicit output modification, internalize L2 forms, and ultimately support L2 attainment (Long, 1996; Varonis & Gass, 1985).

In interactional research, studies on the speech of non-native speakers of languages have focused on linguistic input with an emphasis on how language input is made comprehensible to listeners in L2 acquisition through the interactional strategies such as negotiation of meaning strategy use among L2 learners (Aubrey & Philpott, 2023; Saito & Akiyama, 2017; Wang, 2019; Xu & Shu, 2020). Some focus areas in these studies were the effects of type and complexity of tasks on negotiation strategy use (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Loewen & Sato, 2018; Qiu & Cheng, 2022; Robinson, 2001). For instance, in a study in Hong Kong exploring the experiences of young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, Yan and

Goh (2024) discovered that information gap tasks and cognitively demanding and complex tasks elicited more negotiation strategy use.

Studies also documented the positive effect of negotiation strategy use on L2 acquisition and development (Azkarai et al., 2022; Bitchener, 2004; Mackey et al., 2013; Newton, 2013; Parlak & Ziegler, 2016; Saito & Akiyama, 2017). In Bitchener (2004), negotiation moves and trigger types by pre-intermediate ESL learners were analyzed. These tasks were performed at one-week and twelve-week intervals to specify whether the knowledge gained by the negotiation sequences would be retained over time. According to the results, vocabulary in the information task triggered more negotiation, and most of these items were retained at the end of the twelve weeks. Researchers also discovered a relation between proficiency in a language and the adoption of strategies for dealing with issues in L2 speaking. For instance, language learners with higher proficiency levels in Gökğöz (2008) employed more fluency-directed approaches and a variety of negotiation strategies.

Using the categorization for L2 negotiation discourse, this study focuses on the instances of negotiations during speaking classes, unlike other studies that concentrate on general language teaching activities. Conducted with intermediate-level EFL learners, it provides insight into how learners at this level negotiate meaning through specific strategies. This research aims to uncover the prevalence and quality of negotiated communication in a dynamic interaction environment within an EFL classroom. Previous research has highlighted the need for further studies to explore what triggers negotiation sequences, how these are responded to, the reactions of L2 listeners to modifications in output, and the success rates of negotiations (Xu & Shu, 2020, 2024). Studies also highlighted a need to carry out observational studies aimed at capturing L2 teaching practices of speech acts and pragmatic awareness (Zughaibi, 2023). Thus, this research investigates the NoM strategies adopted by EFL speakers, primarily focusing on particular types of triggers that initiate negotiation sequences, various signals that aim to prevent or repair communication breakdowns, and instances of output modification among language learners with their peers in an instructional context. It aims to illuminate L2 learners' pragmatic awareness states through analysis of the distinctions of learner production and the target language forms and meaning via their realization of speech acts. In line with this aim, the following research questions were generated:

1. How often do EFL learners negotiate in peer-to-peer L2 conversations in naturalistic classroom environments?
2. What are the characteristics of L2 negotiation among EFL learners?

Literature Review

Negotiation Types and Strategies

Negotiation of meaning extends beyond comprehending single lexical items or grammatical structures; rather, it concerns the interpretation of intended meanings. Speech act theory explains how interlocutors negotiate those meanings through speech acts like clarifications, requests, and appeals for help (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). According to Doughty's (2000) NoM model, the NoM sequence comprises the components of trigger, signal, response, and reaction. A "trigger" is a whole bulk or a part of a speech that is incomprehensible to listeners. Smith (2003) defines four types of triggers: (1) lexical, (2) structural/morphological/ syntactic, (3) content, and (4) discourse. Lexical triggers are vocabulary items that cause a non- or partial understanding in a NoM sequence. Structural triggers refer to grammatical or structural patterns that lead to incomprehensibility in meaning. Discourse triggers are linked with coherence in discourse, such as when a speaker cannot relate an antecedent to a pronoun during a communication act. A content trigger is like a lexical trigger; however, it differs from a lexical trigger in that it requires clarification of ambiguous sentences beyond a single lexical item. For example, global indicators such as "I do not understand" and "What do you mean?" can signal a content trigger (Zhao, 2010). Besides lexical, structural, content, and discourse triggers, Nakahama et al. (2001) add pronunciation triggers to the categorization scheme and define pronunciation triggers as utterances leading to NoM when the speaker already knows a word but has a problem conveying the meaning to the listener because of the incomprehensible pronunciation of a word.

The second constituent of the NoM model is the signal. The response from a listener indicating that she or he has not understood a specific part of an utterance refers to a "signal." Long (1983) defines four types of signals in the NoM sequences: (1) requests for clarification, (2) confirmation checks, (3) comprehension checks, and (4) repetition. The first concept, a clarification request, is used to ask for help to simplify an interlocutor's previous sentence. These may consist of wh- or yes/no, tag questions, and phrases such as "I do not follow you", "What did you say?" to show a lack of understanding (Long, 1983). The second kind of signal, a confirmation check, is used by the listeners to check if they have heard or understood what a speaker has said accurately (Doughty, 2000). It can be realized by using a rising intonation, repeating a part of or the whole sentences with or without adopting question tags like "The woman, right? or "The woman?". The speakers can respond with a simple confirmation like "Yes, Mhm" to interlocutors, and it is not necessary to add further new knowledge (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Rulon & McCreary, 1986). The third signal type is a comprehension check, which interlocutors adopt to check if listeners have understood their utterances correctly (Long, 1983). The fourth

type, repetition, is categorized as a NoM communicative device in the form of whole or partial repetitions. These are used to overcome obstacles in interaction and set up arguments (e.g., Did you mean bamboo? Yes, bamboo) (Doughty & Pica, 1986).

In addition to the NoM sequences, negotiation of form (NoF) occurs when interlocutors pay attention to form to solve a linguistic problem. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), appeals for assistance as a negotiation of form (NoF) refer to assistance demanded by L2 speakers who need support in forming accurate L2 forms. In explicit appeals for help, the L2 speaker forms wh-questions to initiate subjects in conversation, thus leading to further interactional moves in the exchange of meanings (Long, 1981). Conversely, implicit appeals for assistance motivate L2 speakers to repair incomplete messages in interaction through strategies such as pauses, which compel the listener to carry on with the ongoing interaction by interactional moves in the L2 interaction (Xu & Shu, 2020).

In line with the literature and theories so far, this study aims to contribute to the line of research in foreign language learning and communication through an analysis of the instances of negotiation sequences as pragmatic engagement cases, in which speech acts such as triggers and signals of NoM function as mediators for negotiation of meaning and form. An appreciation of how EFL learners conduct negotiation in L2 may assist language teachers in guiding them in overcoming challenges their learners might face in interactional exchanges. Analyzing the types of triggers will demonstrate the sources of interactional breakdowns that compel L2 speakers to negotiate for meaning. A corpus of EFL classroom interaction could help explore negotiation strategies in this particular L2 learning environment and suggest a broader array of implementation in other settings.

Methodology

Research population

The participants of this study were 77 B1 to B2 level first-year students at a department of English Language Teaching in Türkiye. Two intact classes were observed in the scope of this study. Forty-five of the participants were female, and thirty-two of them were male. The participants were selected based on criterion sampling among university students, considering predetermined criteria (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants were at least at the B1 proficiency level, which might be a possible threshold proficiency level necessary to conduct L2 speaking tasks for the aims of this study. This group of participants was selected because they were believed to possess pragmatic awareness of speech elements in the language, turn-taking skills in L2, and communicative competence to interact about various subjects in the English language.

Data collection

Two researchers gathered data through classroom observations of Oral Communication I-II courses. This study's scope included thirteen lessons lasting approximately 50 minutes each and interactions during the implementation of tasks. The researchers listened to students' conversations with peers during group work and various tasks and took observer notes to analyze these interactions. One researcher was the course lecturer, while the other was an MA student acting as an outsider. During the data collection phase, the instructor employed information gap tasks and optional exchange activities, such as free group discussions. The tasks included meeting new people, addressing false first assumptions, and discussing music, styles, and celebrities. Activities consisted of role plays, pair dialogues, solving logic puzzles, debates, and picture difference tasks. The course focused on language structures such as expressing disagreement politely, making excuses, using compensation strategies, and clarifying expressions. The tasks conducted in these L2 speaking classes were communicative, promoting interaction among L2 learners through dyads, group work, and information gap tasks. These activities were designed to enhance L2 speaking skills by fostering interaction, negotiation, and L2 communicative competence.

Coding procedures

Speech Act Theory was adopted to specify the pragmatic functions of L2 learners' interaction moves, such as confirmation, requests, and clarifications, in the classroom interaction data (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These acts demonstrate L2 learners' pragmatic competence in dealing with interactional breakdowns and reaching a shared understanding. Using discourse analysis, the instances of NoM and NoF strategy use were analyzed in line with the categorizations and conceptual arguments in the literature. Discourse analysis was employed to examine the relation between the language and contextual factors through the analysis of spoken discourse. The analysis was conducted through the interpretation of utterances rather than the declarations themselves within a pragmatics framework (Obeyd, 2021).

In decoding the researchers' observation notes, all transcriptions were explored to identify NoM and NoF cases and categorize potential triggers. To specify learners' use of NoM and NoF, we followed previous literature (e.g., Doughty, 2000; Long, 1983; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Nakahama et al., 2001; Smith, 2003) and considered NoM or NoF as signals of unintended interactional breakdowns that incite interaction partners to use NoM or NoF strategies to deal with the breakdowns and continue the interaction flow. The interaction among the language learners was analyzed to observe whether there were any incomprehensible or unclear utterances to the listeners. These utterances were then coded as an indicator of possible NoM or NoF sequences. For quantitative data analysis, we

first specified the signal that is the origin of the negotiation sequence, which is like a clarification request. We looked back at the previous utterances from the signal and coded a previous segment of the data as a trigger. The data were first coded in cases when the L2 speakers tried to prevent communication breakdowns through strategies like comprehension checks. Second, the data were coded when L2 speakers used strategies to repair conversational breakdown through requests for clarification, confirmation checks, and other repetitions. After coding the data, the trigger and signal type frequencies were calculated for a descriptive analysis of the occurrences of negotiations of meaning and form. The two researchers independently coded the data, and discrepancies regarding any ambiguities in the coding of the extracts were resolved.

Coding of triggers

The researchers coded the segments of speech that had an erroneous form in linguistic structure or content. The coding demonstrated that there were five main categories of learner errors: lexical, structural, content, discourse, and phonetic errors. Lexical errors concerned problems with word knowledge, collocation, or morphology. Here in this extract from our data, one interlocutor indicates that “It turns out he was bubbly.” In response to this statement, the listener inquires about the word by repetition of the word incomprehensible in meaning: “Bubbly?”. Thus, as the second speaker cannot comprehend the meaning of the word “bubbly,” the speaker tries to comprehend its meaning by expecting an expansion of the word’s definition.

The data in this study were also coded for structural triggers, which concerned grammatical, syntactical, or morphological patterns in a linguistic structure that result in negotiation moves among the interlocutors. The next case illustrates an instance of a breakdown indicated through a structural trigger between two speakers. “Mika: One, two five paper. Donna: Pieces of paper?” (Nakahama et al., 2001, p. 385). In this example, Donna paid attention to form, telling Mika that the correct form was “pieces of paper” rather than “five paper.” The two speakers negotiate the correct grammatical form of countable and uncountable nouns and pluralization.

The data were also coded for the cases of discourse triggers. Discourse triggers initiate negotiation when listeners in a conversation cannot make sense of a piece of information in a text because of issues such as the inability to relate a reference word to a previously mentioned part of speech. In the following case, the listener cannot grasp the meaning of the reference word “first” in the utterance “Is it the first one?” Thus, a lack of understanding of a reference word in discourse triggers a clarification request: “What do you mean by first?”.

Furthermore, the related parts of the data were coded as content triggers because a segment of a text, rather than a single lexical item, caused ambiguity

in speech. Furthermore, conversation sequences were coded as pronunciation triggers when the mispronunciation of a word caused difficulty in conveying the meaning among the speakers. To illustrate, we see an example of how pronunciation caused L2 speakers to negotiate for meaning in the following case: “Sumiko: Preschool ..? [prEskul] [‘prɛ.sku:l] Rita: Pre-school ..? [priskul] [‘prisku:l] Sumiko: Pre-school. [priskul]” (Nakahama et al., 2001, p. 385). When Sumiko mispronounced the word “preschool” because of the pronunciation of the vowel in the first syllable, Rita asked for clarification by pointing out the correct pronunciation. Thus, this section demonstrated how triggers were coded in the data. The next part illustrates extracts from the data in the coding of signals of negotiation.

Coding of signals

The speech data were also analyzed to specify cases demonstrating a breakdown in communication between interlocutors. The conversational data regarding the kinds of L2 negotiation strategies and communicative functions were coded. The following excerpts demonstrate some extracts for particular types of negotiation acts found in the data and the coding procedure for each. In the first excerpt, the first speaker points out, “Is this the vegetable’s name or the name of the dish?” The second speaker replies by saying that “It is the name of the dish.” By asking for clarification, the first speaker prompts the second speaker to rephrase the sentence to achieve a mutual understanding. This example illustrates the coding of a NoM process that consists of a clarification request strategy followed by the speaker’s modification of their output through repetition of the message upon the listener’s request.

The subsequent cases demonstrate the coding of the data regarding confirmation check signals. Here, a speaker does not comprehend the other speaker’s sentence that is “He’s a football player.” So, a confirmation check speech act through an increasing intonation and the partial repetition of the phrase “football player?” is used to guard against misunderstanding. A confirmation check can be seen when a speaker partially repeats the first speaker’s previous sentence as ‘other repetition’ to assert the accurate comprehension of the message.

On the other hand, when speakers made statements to verify if listeners heard or understood what was said correctly, the data were coded as comprehension checks. In the following case, the first speaker seeks to assure that the listener comprehends what they have said correctly by asking “He’s a football player. Does it make sense?” This example illustrates a comprehension check through the global indicator ‘Does it make sense?’ by the L2 speaker to confirm that the listener has accurately comprehended the message.

There were also cases when L2 listeners did not understand a sentence and asked for the repetition of the phrase. These incidents took place when interlocutors might

not have heard it at all or have misunderstood some parts, as in the next extract: Speaker 1: “I don’t like that.” Speaker 2: “What?” Speaker 1: “I don’t like that.” L2 learners asked for repetition to repair a communication breakdown by using the Wh-question marker, “i.e., What?”. Thus, these cases are coded as “asking for repetition” as a signal of incomprehensibility of messages in the data.

Another negotiation strategy, appealing for help, is used by the pairs to get help in the case of an inability to carry on with the interaction due to issues such as a lack of knowledge in grammar, vocabulary, etc., during peer or group work activities in the conversation. The dyad in the following conversation engages in NoM through an appeal for help by asking for the correct form of the word pronounced. Speaker 1: “It is metal /’metəl/. Medal? /’mɛdəl/?” Speaker 2: “Metal /’metəl/” (i.e., using correct pronunciation). In the example taken from our data, Speaker 1 is unsure if the correct word is “medal” /’mɛdəl/ or “metal” /’metəl/.

Findings and Discussion

The incidence of NoM sequences

In this section, data from pair and group activities are explored, and the parts of interaction displaying the instances of strategies used to avoid communication breakdowns or repair the incomprehensibility of the messages by the interlocutors are analyzed. The extracts from the data for pairs or groups show the particular types of triggers initiating negotiation and the L2 learner responses to the triggers, the focal point of our inquiries. Among the signals for negotiation for meaning in this study, clarification requests were used the most (n=47), followed by repetition requests (n=42), confirmation checks (n=39), appealing for help (n=5), and comprehension checks (n=4). The common use of clarification requests demonstrates L2 learners’ awareness of interactional breakdowns, willingness to sustain the interaction, and capability to use contextually suitable directive acts to maintain conversation flow. As directive illocutionary acts, clarification requests accomplish both an interpersonal and linguistic function. Therefore, L2 learners in this study use clarification requests to maintain conversational flow and clarify the intended meaning. The high frequency of repetition and confirmation checks in this study may also show learners’ preference for linguistic verification besides interaction clarity. The relative infrequency of appeals for help and comprehension checks may also show L2 learners’ concerns for face threats and tendency to rely on self-initiated repair strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

According to the findings, there were several instances of NoM, which supported the arguments that NoM takes place in non-native speaker communication (Varonis & Gass, 1985), peer interaction (Ellis, 2012), and information exchange tasks (Foster, 1998). These findings are echoed in previous literature as well, in

which NoM took place in many instances in peer-to-peer conversations working on their interlanguage forms for reaching a more target-like proficiency (Foster & Ohta, 2005; García Mayo & Pica, 2000).

It is possible that the task design in this study contributed to the relatively frequent use of negotiation strategies by L2 learners. Especially in information gap tasks, non-native speakers are more likely to negotiate for meaning when implementing classroom tasks (Doughty & Pica, 1986). It could be possible that as language learners worked in groups, it also became more likely for our learners to construct more comprehensible input and output while negotiating for meaning (Foster, 1998). It could also be the case that when communication occurs between non-native groups of learners, NoM is more frequent than in teacher-led classes (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Rulon & McCreary, 1986). Furthermore, learners' frequent use of negotiation strategies could be understood as illustrations of pragmatic competence, reflecting their capability to adopt suitable speech acts to resolve interactional breakdowns. The frequent use of reformulations in the form of clarification requests and confirmation checks to repair or elaborate on the preceding concepts may proliferate our beliefs about the function of language awareness in the way of reaching a shared understanding in interlanguage interaction.

However, the instances of NoM and the resulting negative evidence indicating negotiation among L2 learners could still be more prevalent in the data, considering the number of students and the weeks observed. This might suggest that the L2 learners in this study needed more opportunities to negotiate meaning, give and take negative evidence, and engage in output modification to acquire and develop L2 skills. These findings highlight the conversational constraints of EFL classes, which are the primary source of interactional practice.

The nature of NoM sequences

The second question referred to the nature of NoM instances in the data. The findings in this study demonstrated that instances of NoM and NoF consisted of clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, appeals for help, and repetition. Among these strategies, clarification requests had more common use than the other strategies in line with the previous literature (Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2016; Azpilicueta-Martínez & Lázaro-Ibarrola, 2022; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Lázaro Ibarrola & Hidalgo, 2017; Mackey et al., 2007). When faced with incomprehensible situations, L2 learners may indicate non-understanding and compel their peers to make output modifications in their interlanguage (Nakahama et al., 2001).

More particularly, lexical triggers initiated the most requests for clarification in this study (n=30), followed by structural (n=10), content (n=3), discourse (n=3), and phonetic errors (n=1). Regarding vocabulary leading to interactional

problems, we discovered unknown L2 words such as “landfill” and “dustbins,” eventually leading to miscommunication and meaning negotiations among our L2 learners. As lexical items are more noticeable and disruptive of intended meaning, their dominance in triggers may demonstrate their essentiality to maintaining meaning negotiation over structural or phonetic issues. The predominance of lexical triggers might show that meaning negotiation was semantically-oriented, which focused on conveying correct meaning.

Apart from lexis, structural issues such as grammar led to cases of interactional breakdowns and, thus, requests for clarification. The subsequent excerpts illustrate instances of structural triggers causing communication problems among L2 learners. In the first case, the first speaker says that “There is no such word as borned /bɔ:rnɪd/. It is born /bɔ:rn/.” The other speaker responds by emphasizing the correct pronunciation of the word, repeating, “Born?” “/bɔ:rn/”. The first speaker then reinforces the message once more by indicating the intended meaning with the correct pronunciation of the word: “Yes, born. /bɔ:rn/ (I was born..)”. Here, the listener corrects the interlocutors’ speech in response to incorrect grammatical use of the word “born.” There is an instance of other-reformulation by the second speaker, which clearly demonstrates awareness of an ambiguity in speech. On the other hand, the lower frequency of structural triggers may imply that L2 learners were more tolerant of grammar and sentence structure deviations. The next case demonstrates an instance of a content trigger that compels the L2 speaker to ask for further information from the other speaker in the form of a clarification request. Speaker 1: “They bring it.” Speaker 2: “How do they bring it?” Speaker 1: “They get it from the ocean and bring it to the factory.” Here, the listener would like to make sure that they understand how raw material is brought to the factory and asks the other speaker to add more content to the message.

The inability to relate a concept in discourse to an antecedent in speech also led to clarification requests during a conversation. Here in the first case, “What is its name?” the speaker uses the reference word “its” and the listener responds, “The music’s name?” to clarify what concept is intended by the reference “its” before moving on to responding, and until they reach a common understanding. The infrequency of content and discourse triggers showed that L2 learners had, in rare cases, difficulties in coherence. This might show that language learners in this study had reasonably well discourse-level pragmatic awareness, namely, demonstrating an ability to follow topic flow and turn-taking.

In the data, there were also requests for clarification led by the incorrect pronunciation of the target language items. The following extracts demonstrate phonetic errors in the pronunciation of L2 speakers, leading to sequences of negotiations: Speaker 1: “Silver?” “/’sɪlvər/” Speaker 2: “Cider” “/’saɪ.dər/”. Speaker 1: “Cider” “/’saɪ.dər/”. Here, in this case, the listener checks whether the

word is correctly pronounced, repeating the word “silver”, “/’sɪlvər/”, and asking if this is the word intended. However, the other L2 speaker replies that the word is indeed “cider” “/’saɪ.d əɹ/” The interaction comes to a successful end when the listener finally accepts that “cider” “/’saɪ.d əɹ/” is the correct pronunciation. Consequently, these types of phonetic errors were found to trigger negotiation of meaning in the data. Conversely, the rare occurrence of phonetic triggers may suggest that even when interlocutors had accented speech, they could ensure mutual intelligibility. This finding could also show L2 learners’ lack of metapragmatic awareness in identifying phonetic errors.

The next part of the findings and discussion focuses on the confirmation check signals and trigger types under this category. A deeper analysis of the nature of requests for confirmation showed that confirmation check signals of meaning negotiation were initiated mainly by lexical triggers (n=29), followed by content (n=5), structural (n=2), phonetic errors (n=2), and discourse triggers (n=1). Using a relatively high proportion of confirmation checks by L2 speakers reveals that learners attempted to reconstruct the incomprehensible messages more, which might indicate the development of higher-order cognitive processing skills (Hidalgo, 2021; Xu & Shu, 2024). The use of a relatively high proportion of confirmation check strategy by L2 learners to prevent any communication breakdown, thus might suggest that these learners’ capability to pay attention to the needs of their interlocutors, which develops over time, especially in adult learners (Hidalgo, 2021).

The following extract illustrates a lexical trigger initiating a confirmation check in the data. In this case, the listener inquires about the material being discussed by stating, “It is a form of leather?” and the first speaker confirms the message by giving an affirmative answer, “Yes, leather”. All in all, the requests for confirmation were conducted either by partially repeating the incomprehensible part of the message by L2 speakers or by using signal words. Here, this case demonstrates that a confirmation check was used to verify the meaning of a particular word. L2 learners sought assurance in cases when they guessed a potential mismatch between intended and perceived meaning. This demonstrates learners’ metapragmatic awareness, as learners could identify possible ambivalence in lexis and check comprehension without overtly disrupting the conversation flow.

Demonstrating instances of content triggers initiating negotiation; in the following example, the interlocutor says, “I’d like to book your flight two days later.” As the listener is unable to understand the content, they ask “Two days later?” using a question mark and rising intonation. Therefore, the content of a message functions as a trigger for negotiation of meaning in the form of confirmation requests. In the following case, an example of a confirmation request triggered by a phonetic error is illustrated. The first interlocutor states that “He is holding

a thing that looks like a towel, /'taʊ.əl/." The listener replies by articulating the word "Bubble?", "/bʌb.əl/", with a rising intonation. The interlocutor repeats the word "towel", "/taʊ.əl/", to reach a common understanding. Here, the listener cannot understand the pronunciation of the word "towel" and mistakes it for the word "bubble" because of the incorrect articulation of the word.

The last part of the results section focuses on the cases of comprehension checks used by language learners. Three out of four comprehension checks regarded lexical items, and there was also one case of a content trigger causing the use of a comprehension check by an L2 speaker. The following is a case of a lexical item triggering a signal of comprehension check. In this instance, when students talk about unusual food from all over the world, one of the students names a type of food "Döğmeç", "/døu'metʃ/", which is a local type of food from Türkiye. However, as the student is unsure if the other students are familiar with this food, the student states that "Döğmeç, "/døu'metʃ/" Have you heard it?" The listener replies by stating, "No, what is it?" and the first student goes on explaining it further.

The scarcity of comprehension checks in this study corroborated the low frequency of these strategies in previous studies (Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2016). The low number of comprehension checks may suggest that L2 learners could be ignoring the listeners' implicit signals of non-understanding of the meaning as a face-saving strategy in the interaction. It could also be argued that comprehension checks are other-initiated repairs, which may not occur frequently in informal and classroom L2 learning settings (Sacks et al., 1978; Tudini, 2010; Van Dam [van Isselt], 1993). The face-to-face nature of the communicative environment may reduce the probability of using comprehension checks, as it can be possible to comprehend messages through gestures (Lee et al., 2019; Xu & Shu, 2024). Moreover, the rare occurrence of comprehension checks in interaction can also point to the self-centered disposition of L2 learners, as they may choose to concentrate merely on their learning (Oliver, 1998; 2002; Yan & Goh, 2024).

Aside from NoM sequences, instances of NoF as explicit appeals for help have also been discovered in our classroom interaction data. In the following case, a student appeals for help with a language structure to describe a song to their partner in a conversation activity. In response to the first speaker's sentence "There were very old songs there (in that album)," the second speaker responds by stating, "How can I describe the song?" (Looks at the partner, laughs, and waits for help.) In the second case, the student appeals for help from his peer with correctly pronouncing the word "tomb." The student again gives alternative forms like "Tomb /tu:m/ or thumb /θʌm/?" to learn the correct pronunciation of the word. Thus, in line with Nakatani (2005), the help-seeking strategies of asking for help and requesting repetition were found to be used by the L2 learners in this study. L2 learners employed the first strategy when they required

assistance from other interlocutors due to their L2 knowledge deficiency. The second strategy was used by L2 learners when they could not hear or understand a prior utterance. Learners applied these strategies in their L2 without reverting to their native language. However, overall, the data in the current study showed fewer instances of appeals for assistance compared to other strategies, as noted by Xu and Shu (2024). The limited occurrences of appeals for explicit help in this study's data may suggest that the L2 learners could be displaying implicit signals of message incomprehensibility.

According to the findings, overall, this study included cases of lexical items, phonetic errors, language structures, discourse, and content triggers initiating negotiation. In line with the previous literature, vocabulary items triggered various instances of negotiation for meaning compared to other triggers (Bitchener, 2004; Nakahama et al., 2001; Yi & Sun, 2013). As this study demonstrated a frequent negotiation around vocabulary items, and thus, this EFL setting provided L2 learners with opportunities to attain new vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, NoM equipped language learners with more favorable circumstances for L2 learning through constant interactional adjustments by the interlocutors to deal with incomprehensible input (Foster & Ohta, 2005). The rare occurrence of grammatical errors as a source of incomprehensibility in meaning in this study also echoed the findings of the previous studies in the field (Lee, 2002; Moradi & Farvardin, 2020; Toyoda & Harrison, 2002). It is argued that, as learners are not usually worried about grammar errors in speech, they do not usually consciously pay attention to form when carrying out speaking tasks (Pica, 1996; Pica et al., 1989).

There were also a few cases of pronunciation triggers initiating negotiations in this study. This finding could imply that language learners do not respond to pronunciation triggers often, as they do not lead to many cases of lack of understanding in conversation, especially when speakers share the same native language (Varonis & Gass, 1985). On the contrary, vocabulary triggers are considered more crucial for understanding meanings in conversation, and the lack of them causes a lack of understanding of messages (Bitchener, 2004), which may explain the dominance of lexical triggers in interactions in our data. Thus, vocabulary difficulties are more likely to cause communication breakdown than morphosyntax ones, as it is harder to comprehend a message when there is a missing, incorrect, or unfamiliar word (Foster & Ohta, 2005). Consequently, the B1-level Turkish EFL learners in this study rely more on putting their meaning across to their peers instead of forming grammatically correct utterances in spontaneous conversations in class.

Conclusion

A picture of how NoM is conducted in EFL classes could provide language teachers, researchers, and education policy developers with classroom data on how L2 speaking classes could be designed using particular teaching techniques and supported with more suitable materials for efficient language skills practice. NoM is crucial in L2 interaction because if negotiation of meaning strategies is not implemented when breakdowns occur in communication, this could form a barrier to second language learning. For instance, if learners do not show that they have not understood some parts of a communicative exchange, teachers and peers might think that the conversation is clear to everyone (Azkarai & Imaz Agirre, 2016). To cope with breakdowns in communication, conversation partners can consider the sequence of utterances triggering the non-understanding, the utterances acting as a signal for the incomprehensibility of the message, and the response to signals (Bitchener, 2004).

NoM is helpful in second language acquisition because learners take feedback when listeners signal the incomprehensibility of messages. The speakers could adjust their speech to make it comprehensible through feedback on all or some parts of messages using strategies such as repetition and rising intonation (Bitchener, 2004). Through NoM, input is made comprehensible to learners, improving language acquisition (Long, 1983). The use of NoM and NoF strategies among L2 learners has the potential to assist the progress of L2 knowledge construction through social interaction and mediation. Furthermore, explicit forms of negotiation for meaning, such as clarification requests, elicitation, etc., may be more influential in aiding second language acquisition than implicit forms of meaning, such as recasts (Suzuki, 2018).

Contrarily, it is also argued that NoM could be demotivating because language learners might think that, because of negotiation during the conversation, they can demonstrate a lack of skill to use the target language successfully (Aston, 1986). According to the findings of previous studies, interlocutors in L2 environments may refrain from initiating NoM by ignoring triggers or leaving the subject ambiguous because of the fear of losing face (Van der Zwaard & Bannink, 2016, 2020). The social factors, such as shame and perceptions of inability to accomplish desired outcomes through showing non-comprehension of specific lexis in L2 during an informal interaction with peers, for instance, might lead to a face-threatening space for the L2 learners (Van der Zwaard & Bannink, 2016, 2020).

However, communication among non-native speakers allowed L2 learners in this study to practice language skills in a relaxed environment. This allowed language learners to be exposed to L2 input through NoM, which contributed to developing their L2 skills (Varonis & Gass, 1985). However, as Pica et al. (1989) put forward, negotiation activities might not promote the expected interlanguage

ramifications at all times, and learners might not always utilize the learning opportunities arising due to negative feedback. For instance, the response to a confirmation check may come in the form of a denial or confirmation; thus, it may not always lead a speaker to reformulate their sentences, as does a clarification request. All the same, several negotiation sequences were observed in this study. When the interaction between a listener and a speaker broke down, the language was adapted linguistically through negotiation to deal with the message's incomprehensibility. Using negotiation for meaning, learners in this study worked on their interlanguage forms and paid more attention to phonology, lexis, and syntax. Thus, they had opportunities to learn these language forms better, and language acquisition could be facilitated (Suzuki, 2018).

In a traditional teacher-fronted language classroom, learners might not have many opportunities to practice their language skills due to limited chances for participating in turn-taking in speech. This study provided proof reinforcing the adoption of interactive tasks, as learners engaged in information gap and opinion tasks, nearly all interacted using the target language. Despite not having very native-like communication capabilities in English, L2 learners accomplished tasks autonomously, took part in conversations over the weeks during the two semesters, and realized their roles as interlocutors. The tasks used in this study have been validated as a crucial means to help L2 learners in language learning by constructing a meaningful context to practice L2 speaking, especially in EFL contexts where language learners have limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Taking the findings of this study into consideration, the NoM framework has the potential to supply learners with standardized strategies that could guide them in dealing with issues regarding the language structure and the content of messages (Xu & Shu, 2024). On the other hand, this study implies that there is still a necessity for helping L2 learners acquire pragmatic competence. Thus, integrating pragmatics courses into pre-service language teacher education curriculum could be one essential practice (Ivanova, 2018). It is recommended that further studies explore the impact of providing training to language learners on how to implement negotiation strategies on their linguistic skills development. The strategies for negotiation could also be included in textbooks for speaking, and negotiation strategies could be explicitly taught to English language learners.

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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED BANGLADESHI UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: *The integration of technology-assisted language learning (TALL) in English education has become a crucial topic of discussion within Bangladesh's expanding higher education sector. This paper aims to explore the multifaceted challenges, potential benefits, and promising pathways for Bangladeshi undergraduate students engaging in technology-facilitated language learning. By examining the current educational environment and infrastructure, the study highlights a comprehensive view of the interaction between English language learning and the use of technology, identifying key obstacles and potential advantages. Simultaneously, it highlights the various technologies utilized by students, the challenges they encounter, and the impact of these technologies on their language learning experience. The study utilized a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. A total of 100 undergraduate students from 16 public and private universities in Bangladesh took part in a semi-structured survey. The findings reveal that students heavily depend on technology for language learning but face significant personal and institutional challenges like inadequate teachers' training and infrastructure, interrupted electricity, and internet issues. Despite limited institutional support, many students independently access advanced technologies for language learning. In addition, the study finds a strong interest in TALL among learners, addressing the need for better logistical support to maximize TALL benefits and overcome barriers.*

Keywords: *EFL Learning Technology; Language Learning; Language Teaching; EdTech; EFL in Bangladesh; AI in Language Learning*

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Introduction

The landscape of language learning has been profoundly reshaped by the rapid advancement of technology, which has introduced innovative approaches to language acquisition. Among these, Technology-Assisted Language Learning (TALL) stands out as a transformative paradigm, which refers to integrating digital tools and platforms into the learning process to foster more dynamic, interactive, and individualized educational experiences. In the fast-evolving landscape of education, the incorporation of technology has transformed conventional teaching methods, providing fresh pathways for effective and engaging learning experiences for the students (Buddha et al., 2024). Using technologies properly can enhance the capabilities of educators and learners, liberating them from conventional approaches to teaching and learning. In this context, TALL has the potential to bridge the gap between traditional language learning methods and the demands of modern, globalized communication.

Bull and Ma (2001) point out that TALL includes a variety of online platforms, apps, and digital tools that support language learning and accommodate different learning styles and needs, including multimedia projectors, laptops, Web 2.0, Google Meeting, Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and smartphones. Also, technology's importance as a tool to help teachers support their students' language acquisition continues to expand (Ahmadi, 2018). Furthermore, technology-assisted education is becoming increasingly necessary in Bangladesh because the country's educational infrastructure faces numerous challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortage, and restricted access to high-quality learning materials (Haque & Akhter, 2014). Integrating technology can help bridge the urban-rural education gap by providing remote learning opportunities and access to a wealth of online educational materials (Gurgenidze, 2018). Using digital technology in language instruction fosters a student-centered learning environment and makes instructors able to present contents in diverse methods to involve students in different activities. Similarly, mobile apps, online courses, and AI-driven platforms offer cost-effective and flexible learning opportunities, catering to a diverse population (Ahmad, 2016). Additionally, TALL can support Bangladesh's economic growth by enhancing English proficiency, a valuable skill in the global job market. In light of these, government and non-governmental organizations are recognizing the importance of digital literacy and are investing in programs to enhance technological skills among students and educators (Mallick et al., 2020).

Despite the promising prospects of TALL, its implementation in the Bangladeshi higher education system remains under-explored and under-researched. While the integration of technology in education has gained momentum, its application in language learning is still in the nascent stages, with numerous challenges that inhibit its full potential. These challenges include infrastructure limitations, the

digital divide, limited access to reliable technology, disparities in digital literacy among both students and instructors, the lack of comprehensive frameworks for the effective incorporation of technological tools into the curriculum, and the need for adapting teaching methods and these can hinder the smooth adoption of TALL in language education (Mili & Ahmad, 2020). In addition to these challenges, Hossain (2021) identifies several key problems in Bangladesh, including a lack of financial and technological support, unreliable internet access, difficulties for distant learners to connect, and the elevated expenses associated with internet access and devices, especially for public university students. Furthermore, the digital divide exacerbates these issues, creating a significant disparity between students with access to necessary resources and those without (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The lack of adequate training for educators to effectively use technological tools in their teaching methods also poses a major obstacle (Talukder & Sikder, 2024). Additionally, Suchona (2024) points out that the existing curriculum in many universities is not designed to incorporate digital tools, making it challenging to implement TALL effectively. These factors collectively create a challenging environment for the integration of TALL in Bangladeshi undergraduate education, necessitating comprehensive strategies and investments to overcome these barriers. Consequently, there is a significant gap in understanding how technology is being utilized by undergraduate students in Bangladesh for language learning, the specific problems they encounter, and the prospects for improving the efficacy of such initiatives.

This study aims to fill this gap by systematically examining the challenges and opportunities associated with TALL among undergraduate students in selected Bangladeshi universities. Through an in-depth investigation, this research seeks to identify the barriers that limit the effectiveness of technology in enhancing language learning outcomes, including infrastructure issues, pedagogical shortcomings, and student engagement. In parallel, the study will explore the untapped prospects of TALL, such as mobile learning, online language learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and digital collaborative tools, which have the potential to overcome these challenges and enrich the language learning experience.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the Bangladeshi context, an area that has been notably underrepresented in global TALL literature. While there has been substantial research on TALL in developed countries and some emerging economies, the specific dynamics within Bangladesh's higher education system remain largely unexplored. This study, therefore, offers unique insights into the intersection of technology and language learning within a developing nation, where educational and technological infrastructures are evolving but not yet fully realized. The findings of this research will provide a detailed understanding of the current state of TALL in Bangladeshi universities, identifying both the

immediate challenges that need to be addressed and the strategic opportunities for leveraging technology to enhance language learning.

Furthermore, understanding the role of technology in language education and its capacity to enhance student learning is not only timely but also crucial for shaping the future of higher education in Bangladesh. This paper makes a significant contribution to the field of TALL by addressing the unique challenges and prospects within a specific, yet increasingly relevant, national context. The findings will be of value to educators, policymakers, and university administrators in Bangladesh and similar contexts. It will also provide actionable insights for integrating technology more effectively into language curricula. By contributing to the global discourse on TALL, this study aims to inform future research and policy development, ensuring that technology serves as a powerful tool for enhancing language education in the 21st century.

Research Objectives

This study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- To evaluate the current status and feasibility of implementing TALL in Bangladesh within the existing educational landscape and infrastructure.
- To identify the main barriers and potential benefits for implementing TALL in Bangladesh.
- To evaluate the extent of students' access to technology, their proficiency levels, and social influences impacting their use of TALL.
- To determine the familiarity of language teachers and learners with TALL and its features.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following queries in order to understand the background of TALL in Bangladesh:

- What is the current status of TALL in Bangladesh, and how feasible is its implementation within the existing educational landscape and infrastructure?
- What are the main barriers and potential opportunities for implementing TALL in Bangladesh?
- To what extent do students have access to technology, and what are their proficiency levels and social influences?
- How familiar are language teachers and learners with TALL and its features?

Literature Review

Bangladesh has been largely digitalized, and a lot of scholars highlight how important it is to integrate technology into the Bangladeshi curriculum, particularly in higher education (Mahmuda, 2016). In this era of technology, the traditional methods of teaching and learning prove to be insufficient (Mallick et al., 2020). Thus, Susikaran (2013) opines that the chalk-and-talk technique of teaching English is insufficient, so there have been fundamental changes in the classroom. Hence, “many nations have already integrated technologically-based strategies into their educational development plans or are in the process of doing so” (Kurt, 2014, p. 91). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (2013) states that it is uncommon to see a language of instruction devoid of technological integration. However, Bangladesh was unable to implement e-learning and m-learning, unlike developed nations ten years ago, due to a shortage of electricity and computers in the educational system (Begum, 2011). But currently, to align with global trends and realize the aim of a “Digital Bangladesh”, the administration of Bangladesh stimulates the integration of technology in all facets of daily life (Fatema & Sultana, 2020). Furthermore, Alam and Islam (2008) find that in Bangladesh, using SMS technology to create an interactive online learning environment is one of the most promising strategies for distance learning. So, the Government of Bangladesh has started to implement the use of technology in English language learning in an effort to improve students’ learning (Parvin & Salam, 2015). In November 2009, Bangladesh initiated BBC Janala, a multi-platform initiative funded by UKAID for second language acquisition via mobile phones, intending to educate six million individuals in Bangladesh (Begum, 2011). The initiative was titled Janala, utilizing the internet and rapidly advancing mobile technology for English instruction. Since then, technology has started to be used in second language learning in Bangladesh (Begum, 2011). The project was plausible because of the cheap call rate and SMS services.

After that, multimedia technology has been included in university teaching, and it is believed that this technology would improve Bangladesh’s traditional pedagogy (Mallick et al., 2020). In light of this, in the last few years, technology has been completely assimilated into the daily lives of individuals. Through this domain of technology, language contact and communication can easily be achieved (Derakhshan et al. 2015). Ahmadi (2018) says that “the use of technology has become an important part of the learning process in and out of the classroom. Every language class usually uses some form of technology” (p. 115). Likewise, Melkonyan and Matevosyan (2020) assert that technology significantly influences the learning process, providing multiple choices for learners. Furthermore, he says cutting-edge digital tools and platforms are improving foreign language instruction and establishing a new paradigm for language learning and teaching. Baytak et al. (2011) researched technology

in language learning, and they found that incorporating technology into the classroom has increased students' learning process, motivation, social interactions, and engagement. Consequently, the learning has also become interesting, enjoyable, and interactive (Chen & Liu, 2012).

Nowadays, new technology has significantly improved the ease and effectiveness of language learning (Parvin & Salam, 2015). It enhances language skills through interactive language learning apps, real-time translation tools, and immersive language platforms (Cano, 2014). The smart board, also known as an interactive whiteboard, promotes interaction-based learning and boosts student engagement in class (Hossain & Al Hasan, 2023). These resources provide practice, instant feedback, and exposure to diverse content, improving speaking, and writing, listening, and reading proficiency (Gurgenidze, 2018). Çakici (2016) claims that information and communication technology (ICT) is crucial for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Students will be able to use English in a more casual, genuine, and conversational setting if new ICT tools like interactive whiteboards are incorporated into the educational programs. As stated by Zhao (2013), similar to face-to-face conversations, computer-mediated communication is a helpful tool for language learning, and computer-based talks enable more equitable participation. In addition, using computer-assisted language learning (CALL) changes how students think about learning and boosts their confidence (Mili, 2020). Furthermore, as concluded by Chapelle (2001), teaching English as a second language with multimedia technology has proven to be very advantageous, particularly for non-native English speakers.

Thus, research conducted by Afrin (2014) shows that “the lesson is more interesting if a teacher uses electronic tools, and they prefer learning from a teacher who uses various e-tools while teaching” (p. 72). Similarly, Young and Bush (2004) claim that implementing technology in English language education is important because it enhances the quality of learning by promoting student engagement. According to Mahmuda (2016), through the internet, students have access to a multitude of online resources, such as interactive language learning websites, online dictionaries, audio and video content, and language learning programs. Bahari (2023) says that these tools allow students to learn at their own pace and give them more chances to get better at the language. Additionally, Costley (2014) asserts that ICTs offer a number of benefits, including the ability for students to participate actively, have discussions involving sufficient information, process newly given instructional materials, and enhance their language learning skills. Smartphone applications are also considered a suitable medium for contemporary English language learners (Zilber, 2013). Cano (2014) adds that smartphones and other portable digital devices possess substantial pedagogical potential. Consequently, the accessibility of these technologies for nearly all students has established their use as the prevalent instructional method for EFL learners in contemporary education.

Hossain (2018) notes that EFL learners in Bangladesh have ample access to smartphones and other advanced technologies, facilitating English language learning through various apps which have numerous opportunities. He also asserts that university-level EFL students in Bangladesh are maximizing the utilization of technological resources both within and beyond the classroom environment. He further states that studying English language using these technologies is time-efficient and allows for flexible learning positions, including standing, sitting, and lying down. Afrin (2020) says that these technological advancements brought about significant changes at the time of the Coronavirus pandemic in Bangladesh. During the worldwide COVID-19 lockdown, in Bangladesh, online education was considered to be a safe, effective, adaptable, and easily available method to improve students' English language ability (Raheem & Khan, 2020). Hossain (2021) claims that throughout the epidemic, Bangladeshi educational institutions including universities, higher secondary schools, and secondary schools gradually switched to online instruction, doing away with the requirement for substantial physical classrooms or other infrastructure. Likewise, Hossain and Haque (2022) assert that this transition to video classes conducted from anywhere saved time and provided flexibility for students, allowing them to attend classes during their free time and avoid transportation issues.

There exists a plethora of contemporary EFL video learning and gaming applications that facilitate the acquisition and enhancement of English language skills. These accessible and complimentary platforms facilitate the enhancement of visual, aural, reading, writing, and kinesthetic skills through captivating movies and interactive activities. Both educators and learners can utilize these resources for instructional and learning purposes. Altun (2015) asserts that students' motivation and linguistic awareness are increased when teachers include technology into the target language acquisition process, including computers, smart boards, smartphones, internet, video games, and music players. In Bangladesh as well as all over the world, the adoption of these technological tools in the educational sector has surged at the time of the pandemic (Raheem & Khan, 2020). In addition to that, Fatema and Sultana (2020) contend that while these online platforms are predominantly employed for amusement, they also serve educational goals and facilitate communication between students and professors beyond the classroom.

Despite significant technological advancements aimed at improving the educational system, several notable limitations and challenges remain in implementing technology in education in Bangladesh (Raheem & Khan, 2020). For example, excessive reliance on technology-driven language acquisition may foster a disconnection between educators and students, so undermining their connections and societal cohesion (Chen & Liu, 2012). Also, developing nations like Bangladesh are still far away from fully implementing TALL (Melkonyan & Matevosyan, 2020). There are lots of factors to be taken into consideration in order to avail from

its full benefits. A significant portion of the population in Bangladesh lacks essential technological resources like computers and internet access, hindering their ability to learn and utilize technology effectively (Haque & Akhter, 2014). The country faces challenges in terms of digital literacy and awareness, with a substantial number of people not comprehending how to use technology securely and efficiently (Fatema & Sultana, 2020; Gençter, 2015). This hinders their capacity to participate in and glean insights from technological progress. Furthermore, Hossain (2021) examined the impact of COVID-19 on higher education and, in line with Afrin (2020), reported that many universities in Bangladesh lack online learning platforms and consistent high-speed internet access.

According to Fatema and Sultana (2020), although Bangladesh's ratio of technology users is still relatively low, it is rising steadily. However, there is an imbalance between Bangladesh's usage of technology and its technology-based infrastructure, products, and curricula. Parvin and Salam (2015) highlight that most schools lack the essential infrastructure for successful implementation of the innovation for language learning. Though the 2010 National Education Policy of Bangladesh strongly advocates for teachers to incorporate audiovisual tools into English classroom instruction. Therefore, a successful online lesson relies on the teachers' ability, however, it is sometimes seen that the teachers use the content as a tool with insufficient planning (Hossain & Al Hasan, 2023). Concurrently, in Bangladesh, researchers suggest that English language teachers require adequate training in digital media and educational technology to enhance their technical proficiency for effective English language class instruction using technological tools (Afrin, 2014). Parvin and Salam (2015) observe that educators who excel in teacher training tend to exhibit higher levels of effectiveness in classroom facilitation. Nevertheless, Khan (2014) contends that the teacher training programs in Bangladesh faced criticism for being inadequately designed, as they neglected to address the genuine needs of teachers, specifically their challenges in incorporating ICT effectively into the teaching-learning process.

In addition to these, using technology in the classroom can present obstacles for educators, such as connecting and integrating the technology with the curriculum and course syllabus (Çakici, 2016). Despite living in an era characterized by advanced technology, a significant number of teachers remain reluctant to incorporate technological tools into their regular pedagogical practices (Hossain & Al Hasan, 2023). So, regarding English language instruction in Bangladesh, there is a distance between the available technologies and their efficient integration. Ahmadi (2018) argues that technology is essential for language acquisition, yet relying solely on digital resources does not guarantee effective teaching by educators or successful learning by students. Besides, people must grasp the effective and safe use of technology, overcoming potential learning barriers and hesitations through proper guidance. This research aims to uncover

the real-life dynamics of technology utilization in language learning among undergraduate students and teachers in Bangladesh. It will also assess the extent to which they leverage technology's benefits and the challenges they encounter in integrating it into their language learning experiences.

Methodology

Research Design & Instruments

This study employed mixed methodologies, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to validate and deepen the findings as well as to provide a more thorough understanding of the research subject. Also, the study simultaneously collected qualitative and quantitative data and analyzed them separately for interpretation. These methods helped the researchers calculate findings, strengthen validity, and produce a comprehensive understanding of the facts the researchers will be concentrating on, including their current state. The qualitative method, which gives participants' perspectives priority, allows for a more profound understanding of the subject being studied; the quantitative method, which values participant opinions, enables a researcher to extrapolate the findings to a wider population (Dawadi et al., 2021).

In this study, a semi-structured online questionnaire was used to gather information from respondents, consisting of ten questions, five open-ended and five closed-ended. There were 5-point liker scale (1-5 scale) items (strongly disagree to strongly agree), yes/no, rating measuring user satisfaction, aspects of functionality, learning outcomes, and student engagement using the technologies. Moreover, the questionnaire was validated by two ELT experts and pilot-tested on a small group (10 students) for reliability. Consequently, the experts recommended enhancements to improve the clarity and quality of the instrument.

Setting & Population Sampling

Considering the heterogeneity of higher education environment of Bangladesh, the current research utilizes a stratified sampling technique across 16 prominent public and private universities to strike the right balance of student profiles and ensure that the respondents represent the national population of undergraduate EFL learners. Universities in Bangladesh, whether public or private, show wide discrepancies in their teaching resources, technology facilities, decentralization in institutional governance, geographical location, and socio-economic characteristics of their students. Therefore, we recruited 100 undergraduate EFL learners from these varied settings, which could shed light on the generalizability of the findings. This stratification makes the data more resilient, because it prevents an institution or a region from dominating the data. The

approach and selected demographic help in revealing the true perspectives of the nation’s public and private universities. Moreover, the study delves into both challenges and potential advantages and also provides comprehensive insights into the TALL landscape among Bangladeshi undergraduate students.

This table displays the allocation of 100 participants from various Bangladeshi universities:

Table 1. *Percentage of Student Participation by University*

Name of the University	Type	Percentage of Participation
Begum Rokeya University	Public	7%
Daffodil International University	Private	6.6%
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University	Public	5.4%
Islamic University, Bangladesh	Public	4.4%
Jagannath University	Public	5.2%
Jahangirnagar University	Public	4.2%
Jashore University of Science & Technology	Public	6.4%
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University	Public	5.6%
Noakhali Science & Technology University	Public	4.2%
Pabna University of Science & Technology	Public	4.4%
Pundra University of Science & Technology	Private	12.2%
University of Chittagong	Public	5.2%
University of Dhaka	Public	10.9%
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh	Private	8.5%
University of Rajshahi	Public	5.2%
Varendra University	Private	4.4%
Total		100%

Data Collection & Analysis Procedure

In order to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, the researchers used Google Forms to distribute survey questionnaires between November 17, 2023, and December 14, 2023. The information was gathered throughout the same period. The majority of the surveys were distributed via Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and other social sites. In certain cases, the researchers were required to be convinced and given their consent to participate in the study over the phone. Despite their agreement to participate at their convenience, a few targeted individuals declined to engage in the survey. In order to attain the desired number of students, the researchers then needed to get in contact with additional students. To better illustrate the objectives of the research, the majority of the students were selected from the English discipline, with a smaller number coming from other disciplines.

To produce more accurate and dependable results, a mixed-method approach is used to assess the gathered replies, integrating qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. The responses from the close-ended questions are examined quantitatively, with the findings converted into numerical values and percentages, which are then illustrated using pie charts, infographics, tables, and similar visual aids through tools like Microsoft Excel, Napkin AI, and Live Gap Charts, which are great visual interpreters of turn out into the data.

Findings & Analysis

To comprehensively present the results aligning with the research questions, this section outlines the findings obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the collected responses:

1. Current Status and Feasibility of TALL in Bangladesh

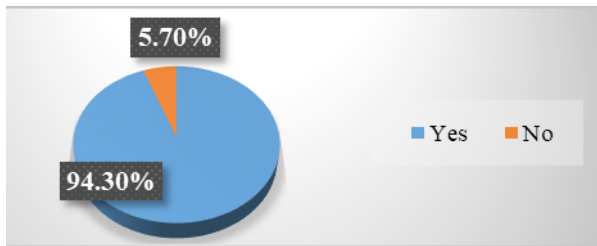


Figure 1. *Impact of Technological Assistance on Language Learning*

The majority of participants in the study, comprising 94.30%, affirmed that students benefit from technological assistance in language learning. Nevertheless, the presence of 5.70% of participants who disagreed suggests that a small portion of learners do not find technological assistance beneficial. This indicates that TALL is generally well supported among learners. These findings emphasize the widespread recognition of technology's positive impact on language learning, emphasizing its role as a valuable tool in facilitating student learning experiences. This indicates that TALL is at large a good initiative in Bangladesh although the pattern might be different for different settings.

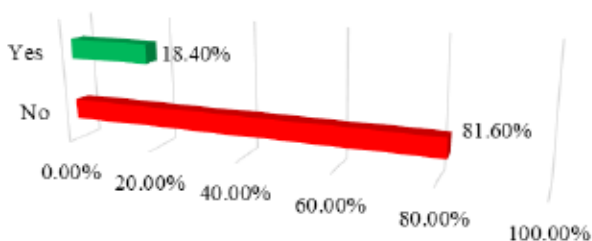


Figure 2. *Availability of adequate infrastructure for utilizing TALL in institutions*

In response to the question about having enough infrastructure for using TALL in the institution, 81.6% of participants said “no,” indicating a significant majority lacking sufficient resources. Conversely, 18.4% answered “yes.” This highlights a prevailing challenge in ensuring adequate technological support for TALL within the institution, potentially affecting the implementation and effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning. It suggests the presence of large-scale infrastructure challenges, which may render TALL impossible to integrate into the landscape of education.

2. Barriers and Potential Opportunities for Implementing TALL

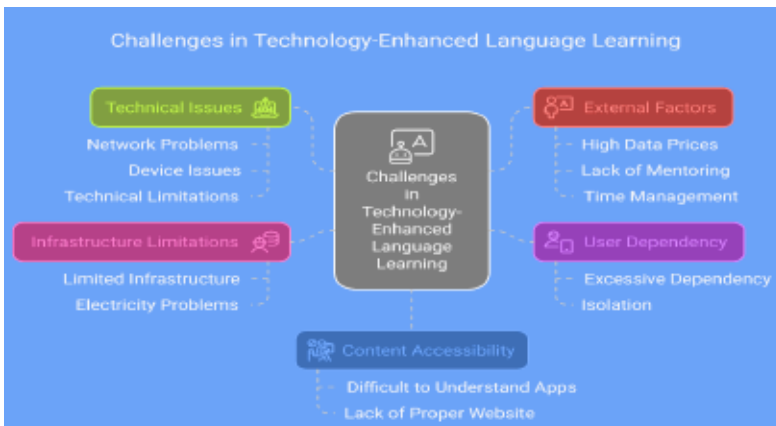


Figure 3. Challenges of Students in Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

Participants identified several challenges to using technology for language learning. Common issues include network problems, excessive dependency on technology, and difficulties in understanding app features, limited infrastructure, limited resources, and the intrusion of advertisements. Students also face challenges related to technical issues, high data prices, and device problems. The struggle to comprehend native accents, electricity problems, time management issues, and technical limitations contribute to the hurdles. The overarching theme is that these challenges may create a sense of isolation for learners, impacting the effectiveness of technology in language education.

The survey findings also uncover the myriad opportunities and benefits derived from technology-assisted language learning. Respondents expressed the advantage of swift learning within a short time, emphasizing the time-saving aspect. Also, the use of standardized tools provides a platform for self-correction, minimizing the discomfort of making mistakes in public. Additionally, learners appreciate the flexibility to progress at their own pace, engaging in enjoyable activities like games. The accessibility of online platforms facilitates practice anytime, anywhere, even with native speakers, thereby enhancing language skills. One of the respondents opine regarding these issues:

Most of the time we cannot find a partner for practice speaking; in this situation we can get help from technology to continue this, and technology can perform with us as if it were a human (Student-77).

The abundance of resources, including apps, videos, and online courses, contributes to a more enjoyable and effective learning experience. A respondent shares his experience as follows:

Some particular apps help me to correct pronunciation, grammar, pose, pitch, and easily find vocabulary, etc. For example, some of the apps I use include Duolingo, Elsa Speak Up, and U Dictionary (Student-22).

Moreover, improved communication and collaboration, coupled with enhanced flexibility and convenience, emerged as key benefits. Furthermore, real-time feedback and interactive exercises were highlighted for their role in sharpening language skills. Respondents acknowledged the cost-effectiveness and ease of understanding associated with digital resources, emphasizing the positive impact on vocabulary and grammar acquisition. Not only that, but many credit technologies with fostering fluency in speaking and improving overall communication skills.

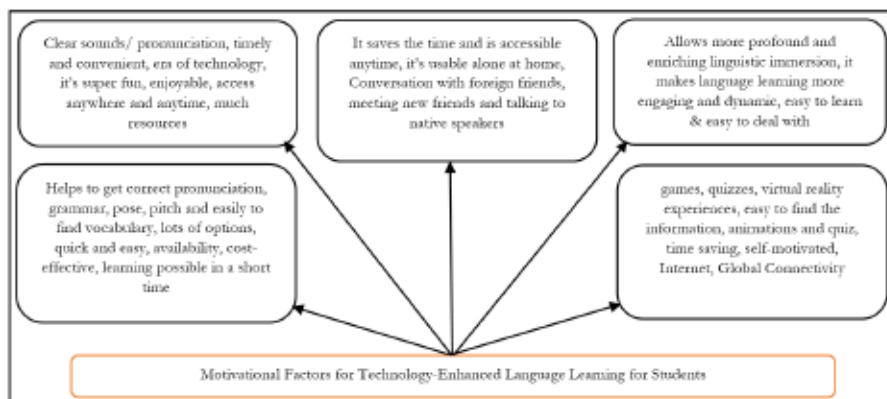


Figure 4. *Motivational Factors for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning*

Participants express strong motivation to use technology in language learning due to various reasons. They find it enjoyable, convenient, and accessible anytime, enabling learning at one's own pace. The appeal lies in clear pronunciation, engaging resources like games and quizzes, and the opportunity to connect with native speakers, fostering linguistic immersion. Learners appreciate the time-saving aspect, cost-effectiveness, and dynamic nature of technology-enhanced learning, which includes virtual reality experiences, animations, and quizzes. The ease of finding information, global connectivity, and the self-motivated

nature of technology contribute to its popularity, making language learning more accessible, engaging, and efficient in the modern era.

3. Access to Technology, Proficiency Levels, and Social Influences

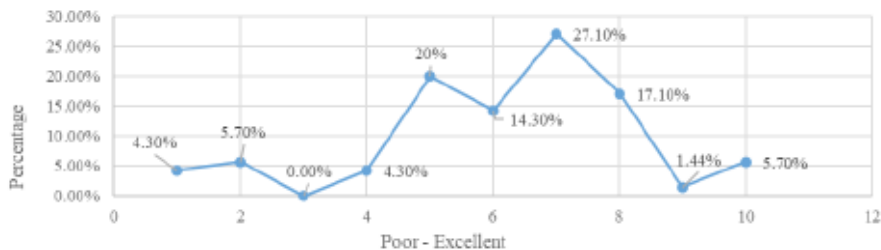


Figure 5. Student Proficiency Levels in Technology-Assisted Language Learning

The presented data delineates the proficiency levels of students in utilizing technology for language learning, with each numerical category representing a distinct competency range. The ordinal scale assigns smaller values (1, 2, and 3) to denote a lower proficiency level, indicative of a poor or insufficient ability to incorporate technology in language learning. Conversely, intermediate values (5, 6, and 7) signify average proficiency, suggesting a moderate level of competence in leveraging technological tools for language acquisition. Notably, higher values (8, 9, 10) are indicative of superior proficiency, reflecting an excellent or expert command of technology in the context of language learning.

The tabulated percentages associated with each proficiency level provide a quantitative perspective on the distribution of technological proficiency among the student population. For instance, the prevalence of students with a proficiency level of 7 is notably high at 27.10%, signifying a substantial proportion of individuals who exhibit an advanced aptitude for utilizing technology in language learning. On the contrary, proficiency levels 3 and 9 are observed to be relatively low at 0.00% and 1.44%, respectively, suggesting a minimal presence of students displaying poor or inadequate and highly expert proficiency in technology-assisted language learning.



Figure 6. Perceptions of Social and Cultural Influences on Technology Use in Language Learning

In the survey, almost 82% of participants said social and cultural factors do not influence their use of technology for language learning, while 18.40% acknowledged such influences. This suggests a prevailing perception among learners that social and cultural aspects play a minimal role in shaping their technological language learning experiences.

4. Familiarity of Language Teachers and Learners with TALL Tools

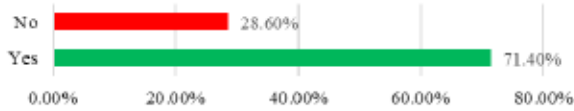


Figure 7. University Teachers' Perceived Capability in Utilizing TALL

The figure shows that most university teachers (71.40%) report being capable of utilizing TALL, indicating they believe they have the proper knowledge to run technological tools associated with language learning. However, 28.60% of students feel that their teachers do not have adequate knowledge of these tools and their features. Students cite a number of reasons for this perception. They believe their teachers might struggle with TALL due to insufficient technological resources in their institutions, a lack of proper usage, inadequate training, or insufficient institutional support. Additionally, some students suggest that their teachers may not regularly practice using these tools or show a lack of interest, potentially due to a lack of arrangements in their institutions. These insights are based on self-reported data and reflect the perceptions of the participants, rather than definitive evidence.

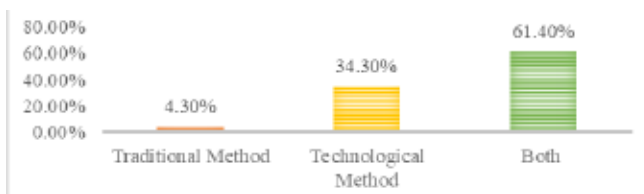


Figure 8. Student Preferences for English Language Learning Methods

The survey reveals diverse preferences among students for English language learning methods. A mere 4.30% favor the traditional approach, emphasizing face-to-face interactions. In contrast, 34.30% express a preference for using technological methods, highlighting the significance of digital tools in language learning. Notably, a substantial 61.40% advocate for a blended approach, endorsing both traditional and technological methods. This nuanced perspective highlights the importance of incorporating a hybrid model to cater to students' varied learning preferences in the context of English language education.

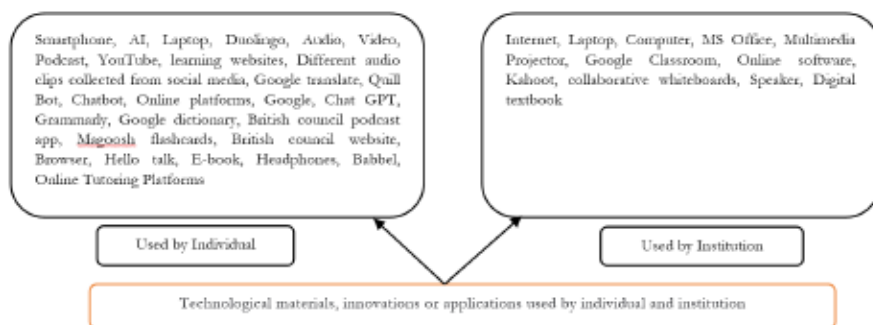


Figure 9. *Technological Tools and Innovations in Contemporary Language Learning Environments*

This comprehensive figure delineates the diverse array of technological materials, innovations, and applications utilized by individuals and institutions in the area of learning languages. Individuals harness the power of smartphones, AI, laptops, and an array of language-specific tools like Duolingo, Google Translate, and ChatGPT. They also leverage multimedia resources such as audio, video, podcasts, and various websites. In contrast, institutions rely on foundational technologies like the internet, laptops, and computers, with additional tools like MS Office, multimedia projectors, and collaborative platforms such as Google Classroom. Engaging tools like Kahoot and digital textbooks contribute to interactive learning, while online tutoring platforms and language-specific apps like Magoosh and Babbel enhance the institutional language education landscape. This dynamic interplay of individual and institutional technology underscores the multifaceted nature of contemporary language learning environments.

Discussion

The incorporation of technology in language learning has become increasingly prevalent worldwide, and Bangladesh is no exception. This study highlights the significant impact of technological tools on English language acquisition among university students in Bangladesh, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of this contemporary strategy.

The findings of this research align with previous studies indicating the growing reliance on technology in education (Young & Bush, 2004). The survey results show that a substantial majority of students (94.30%) utilize technology for language learning, underscoring the widespread acceptance and integration of technological resources in educational settings (Figure 1). This is consistent with the global trend where technology is seen as a critical component in modern language instruction (Blake, 2011). However, the preference for a hybrid learning model combining both traditional and technological methods, as indicated

by almost 62% of the students (Figure 8), suggests that while technology is beneficial, traditional methods still hold value. This is in line with research by Levy and Stockwell (2006), which highlights the complementary nature of traditional and technological approaches to language learning. The need for a hybrid model to accommodate diverse learning preferences is further supported by studies that emphasize the effectiveness of blended learning environments (Graham, 2006). Furthermore, participants highlighted the motivational aspects of using technology, citing clear pronunciation, convenience, and extensive resources as key benefits (Figure 4). These findings are supported by Stockwell (2012), who argues that technology can enhance language learning by providing diverse and immersive experiences. In contrast, a study conducted by Kurt and Bensen (2017) found that students' replies indicated that they are frustrated with utilizing the mobile application to complete activities since the assignments are labor-intensive and complex. Therefore, teachers need to have an idea of the technologies, what they are capable of, and what task they are giving to the students. The affordability and accessibility of smartphones in Bangladesh have democratized access to these technological tools, making language learning more inclusive (Power & Shrestha, 2010). However, Tafazoli et al. (2018) think that the teachers also must consider the limitations of the portable devices as some students face difficulties using them due to technological issues.

Despite the benefits, the study reveals significant challenges related to infrastructural and logistical support. A staggering 81.60% of participants reported insufficient infrastructure for language learning technology (Figure 2). This echoes findings by Hossain and Al Hasan (2023), who identified inadequate infrastructure, unstable internet connections, and unreliable electricity as major obstacles. The absence of the newest technology and inexperienced IT support further exacerbates these issues, highlighting the need for comprehensive infrastructural development and training programs to support the effective implementation of technology in language learning. Additionally, the challenges faced by students, such as network problems, technical issues with apps and devices, and high data costs (Figure 8), are consistent with the barriers identified in previous research (Zhao, 2013; Hossain & Al Hasan, 2023). Moreover, using technology for extended periods of time can create dangerous circumstances for students, leading to health issues like headaches, boredom, and fatigue. These obstacles hinder the seamless integration of technology in language learning and suggest a need for targeted interventions to improve technical support and reduce data costs. Besides, the varying levels of proficiency in using technology for language learning among students (Figure 5) suggest that while some students are adept at utilizing these tools, others require additional training and support. They have trouble using language learning tools and apps efficiently, accessing online platforms, and basic computer skills. This result is in line with Hubbard's

(2013) research, which emphasizes the value of acquiring digital literacy skills in order to optimize the advantages of technology for language learning.

The minimal influence of cultural and social aspects on the use of technology for language learning (Figure 6) suggests that technological adoption in this context is primarily driven by practical considerations rather than socio-cultural dynamics. This is somewhat contrary to findings by Azam et al. (2003), who emphasized the role of cultural factors in technology adoption, indicating a unique aspect of the Bangladeshi context that warrants further investigation. Finally, the disparity in teachers' proficiency with technology for language learning (Figure 9) indicates a need for professional development and support. While a majority of teachers are proficient, a significant proportion (28.60%) lack the necessary skills, which can impede the successful use of technology in the classroom. This finding suggests the call for enhanced teacher training programs in Bangladeshi universities.

Lastly, we must address significant challenges related to infrastructure, technical support, and teacher training, even though technology-assisted language learning presents numerous opportunities for enhancing language acquisition among Bangladeshi undergraduate university students. This study adds to the expanding corpus of research on the use of technology in language instruction and emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive strategy to maximize the advantages of technological resources in this setting.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study clarifies the present situation of TALL in Bangladesh, investigating its feasibility, barriers, opportunities, and levels of familiarity among the students. While the majority of students embrace technology for language learning, the research highlights significant challenges in infrastructure, connectivity, availability of the new EdTech, and teacher preparedness. We found that students use some modern technologies to learn language at their own pace. Although some universities offer modern EdTech, a great number of their faculty members are incapable of running the equipment properly, especially in the public universities. Moreover, it shows that many students are lagging behind due to the internet service, particularly in the rural areas. The findings emphasize the urgent need for government intervention to provide logistic supports, improve internet access and power supply, and establish policies supporting TALL in educational institutions. Additionally, enhancing digital literacy and providing adequate training for teachers are crucial steps towards realizing the full potential of TALL in the Bangladeshi education system, especially as universities continue to integrate EdTech into their pedagogy. Also, this study suggests a blended model, where traditional in-person learning methods are complemented with remote or digital learning,

is likely to be the most effective strategy to reach the greatest number and diversity of students. Despite its evident benefits, addressing limitations and implementing the recommended measures will be essential for the effective integration of TALL and fostering a technologically-enabled language learning landscape in Bangladesh.

Limitations

This study has some limitations to consider. Firstly, the study could not survey all the universities in Bangladesh; it used Google Forms to collect data from 100 students across 16 private and public universities nationwide. This sample size is small, making it challenging to generalize findings for the entire country. Importantly, the study did not include teachers in the survey, which would have provided valuable insights, such as their problems on implementing TALL in the classroom. The survey also did not record names or genders, and it did not observe students or their institutions in person. Additionally, time constraints limited participant response time, impacting the reliability and depth of their answers. The lack of longitudinal data also means that the study could not track changes over time, which is crucial for understanding long-term impacts. Moreover, potential biases in self-reported data could affect the accuracy of the findings. Hence, a direct survey could have added a solid overview to the research findings and enhanced both the validity and reliability.

Recommendations

This study offers several notable recommendations. Improving internet access and guaranteeing a steady power supply must be top priorities for the government and stakeholders in order to increase TALL in Bangladeshi universities. Important actions include building infrastructure, increasing bandwidth, and utilizing cutting-edge technologies like satellite internet. Hossain and Haque (2022) recommend that “the universities should provide sufficient logistical support to both the teachers and the students in terms of essential technological devices and speedy internet facilities” (p. 293). Additionally, government policies supporting TALL should address infrastructure, curriculum adaptation, expert teacher training, content localization, and affordable access to devices. Ensuring language teachers receive adequate training and resources is vital. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with tech companies could provide additional resources and expertise, fostering a more robust learning environment. The integration of mobile learning apps and platforms, as well as continuous monitoring and evaluation of TALL initiatives, would also contribute to their success (Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Khan, 2014).

Future Research Directions

Based on the limitations of this study, there are some suggestions for future research. Future research should expand the sample size of the populations and number of the universities to get more generalized findings. Since this study has been conducted only among students, involving teachers in future studies can provide an in-depth understanding of the pedagogical challenges, technological barriers, and classroom realities while implementing TALL. Demographic variables can also be gathered to understand whether the TALL experiences vary based on the gender, institution or even academic discipline. Furthermore, methodological changes may be considered for including interviews, observations, and focus group discussions to get more in-depth results, which are not covered in this study. Future research may address potential biases in self-reported data by combining survey results with performance tests or teacher evaluations.

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Appendix

Questionnaire:

1. Did you ever get any help from technology in language learning?
2. Which method do you prefer for English language learning?
3. What technological materials, innovations or applications do **you** and **your institution** use for language learning? Write down separately (**you** and **your institution**).
4. Are your language teachers fully capable of **applying** technology-assisted language learning (প্রযুক্তি-সহায়ক ভাষা শিক্ষা) and **its features**? If “no”, then why?
5. What particular factors motivate/inspire you to use technological innovations in language learning?
6. What specific problems and challenges do you face while using technology in language learning?

7. Does your institution have adequate infrastructure for utilizing technology-assisted language learning?
8. What are the social and cultural influences on you when accessing technology for language learning?
9. What benefits and opportunities do you get from technology-assisted language learning?
10. Rate your proficiency level in using technological innovations, materials or applications.

SUBTITLING IN THE CONTEXT OF TECHNOLOGY: TRANSLATING CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN *THE SIMPSONS* SERIES INTO ARABIC

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Abstract: *This article investigates how culture-bound terms in The Simpsons series, season 27, are translated from English into Arabic. The study mainly focuses on the types of culture-bound terms and the subtitling strategies used to translate these terms. Moreover, this research addresses the effectiveness of translation strategies in conveying Arab cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices to Arabic-speaking audiences. The investigation, grounded in two theories, namely, Newmark's taxonomy for culture-bound types and Gottlieb's taxonomy of subtitling strategies, used a descriptive approach to analyze a dataset of 150 culture-bound terms. The findings show that The Simpsons series includes a variety of religious material, social and metaphorical terms as well as terms of address. Data analysis revealed that subtitling strategies, including transfer, expansion, dislocation, deletion, and imitation, have been extensively employed in conveying culture-bound terms to Arabic-speaking audiences. These strategies were effective in conveying Arab cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices by deleting and toning-down words that might contradict Arabic Islamic values and culture. The study aims to enhance our understanding of how subtitling strategies can be leveraged to preserve elements of Arabic Islamic values and culture.*

Keywords: *Translation, subtitling, animated series, The Simpsons season 27, culture-bound terms*

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Introduction

Translation is an effective means of conveying linguistic and cultural nuances from one language to another. In addition, it helps to transform ideas from one language to another. During the translation process, the translator should consider the writer's style and the intended meaning of the original text (Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022; Rothwell et al., 2023). Audiovisual translation (AVT) is considered one of the most flourishing translation fields because of its rapid technological advancement and effect on distribution and media production (Mudawe, 2023; Hakami, 2024). This involves localizing the content of audiovisual media in various linguistic transfer practices (Bolaños-García-Escribano & Díaz-Cintas, 2019). It encompasses various practices, including dubbing, subtitling, revoicing, and startling (Chaume, 2020). Our study focuses on subtitling, which is defined as the texts that emerge on the screen (Abdelaal, 2019; Messerli, 2019; Perez, 2022; Djoudi & Toubakh, 2022; Mudawe, 2023). Subtitling has limitations that are confined to space and time constraints (Karakanta et al., 2021; Chen, 2024). Altogether, these constraints complicate the subtitling process for subtitlers, particularly the Arab ones (Nassif, 2021; Eljazouli & Azmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2024).

While subtitling, translators encounter lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and cultural challenges that hinder the subtitling process (Amanzhol, 2023). In this study, we mainly focused on culture-bound words. According to Djoudi and Toubakh (2022), culture-bound words are considered culture-specific; thus, translating them is one of the major challenges translators in general, and Arabic translators in particular face. In subtitling English movies, Arab subtitlers face a dilemma in toning down sensitive and culture-bound terms in a manner that mitigates the effect of these terms to Arab viewers and in a way that fosters Arab cultural values, norms, and religious practices (Khuddru, 2000; Rejeibi, 2023). Therefore, Arab subtitlers use a variety of subtitling strategies, including omission and adaptation, to address religious and cultural issues in subtitling from English to Arabic (Alkadi, 2010; Al Tamimi & Mansy, 2023).

Our study explores the types of culture-bound terms and subtitling strategies employed in subtitling religious and cultural terms in *The Simpsons* series, which is an animated series created by cartoonist Matt Groening. It revolves around American families and their daily experience. It offers a satirical take of the middle-class American mode of life. We are further concerned with the effectiveness of subtitling strategies in conveying Arab cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices. The translation of culture-bound expressions constitutes a challenge for translators who are required to be bicultural and bilingual (Djoudi & Toubakh, 2022). Within this context, Aixela (1996) pointed out that culture-specific items are challenging because transferring them leads to a translation problem resulting from the absence of equivalent elements in the target culture.

Moreover, Al-Khalafat and Haider (2022) highlight that conveying culture-bound expressions is a daunting task that requires complicated decisions that provoke translators to use various subtitling strategies. In addition, Mudawe (2023) stressed the difficulty of translating culture-bound terms, particularly among translators who are not familiar with the Western culture.

In this study, translating cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices in subtitling *The Simpsons* series from English into Arabic is fraught with challenges because of religious and cultural sensitivities. To handle these challenges, subtitlers need to navigate divergent social norms, comedic conventions, and satirical cues embedded in the series. The hurdles lie in ensuring language precision and modifying the translation to conform to cultural norms and Islamic customs. The following research questions were the focus of this study:

RQ1. What are the types of culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series?

RQ2. What are the subtitling strategies used in subtitling the culture-bound and religious terms in *The Simpsons* series while translating from English to Arabic?

RQ3. How do these strategies contribute to preserving Arab cultural values, norms and Islamic practices?

The present study contributes to the existing knowledge on culture-bound terms and the subtitling strategies used when translating *The Simpsons* series into the Arabic language. To ensure conceptual precision, culture-bound terms are consistently used in the study as the central category of the analysis. Related notions such as religious or social expressions are treated as subtypes in this scheme, to ensure terminological coherence throughout the analysis. Theoretically, this article is relevant to audiovisual translation (AVT) in that it demonstrates how subtitlers deal with cultural peculiarities and negotiate meaning across the linguistic borders. In practice, it provides translators with subtitling strategies, which contribute to producing culture-specific terms that are understandable and culturally acceptable to the Arabic audience. This article also points to the importance of subtitling strategies in the preservation of cultural identity in cross-cultural media translation. The current research uses the terms culture-bound as the umbrella term and religious, social, material, metaphorical, and address expressions as its subunits in the framework of Newmark (1988) to ensure the conceptual uniformity of the study. Similarly, the analysis is specifically focused on the strategies of subtitling as the data are based on limited audiovisual content as opposed to translation in general.

Literature Review

Culture-bound Terms

Several studies (Aixela, 1996; Chiaro, 2009; Pedersen, 2011) define culture-specific items as lexical items with cultural references that can be in the form of fixed expressions, proverbs, and collocations that are inherited in a particular culture.

Regarding the types of culture-bound terms, Espindola (2015) indicates that these terms are classified into 12 categories: (1) religious celebration, (2) dialect, (3) food and drink, (4) scholastic reference, (5) measuring system, (6) means of transportation, (7) forms of entertainment, (8) local institutions, (9) local systems, (10) anthroponyms, (11) toponyms, and (12) fictional characters.

In subtitling, culture-bound terms are pervasive (Akalai, 2024). These terms can be verbal or non-verbal; the verbal ones are manifested in the dialogue and speech of the actors in the film, series, program, etc., while the non-verbal ones are exemplified in street signs, cultural practices, and images pertaining to the source culture (Chiaro, 2009).

Subtitling culture-specific words to Arabic-speaking audiences entails complying with moral standards and adhering to the norms of Arabic culture (Haider & Hussein, 2022). Therefore, translators opt for fine-tuning or omitting vulgar sexual words, insulting expressions, profanities, and obscene words to preserve Arabic viewers' sense of decency (Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023). Moreover, subtitling these words requires the subtitler to be aware of the functions of the culture-bound expressions they carry in the source text to guarantee effective rendering of these expressions to the target language audience (Al-Zgoul & Al-Salman, 2022).

To handle the culture-bound and religious terms that emerge in film subtitling, the translator uses a variety of subtitling strategies to improve the quality of subtitling (Abdelaal, 2019). These strategies are direct translation, cultural substitution, and retention. Rahmani (2024) shows that direct translation is used to transfer religious terms that constitute a part of the media, culture, and art by maintaining a balance between the source and target texts and providing clear and unambiguous meaning. She adds that cultural substitution occurs by transferring religious culture-specific items and adapting them to fit the Arab culture. Retention refers to the transfer of religious cultural terms to convey a similar foreign impact on the target viewers.

Language in the Context of Technology

Language is a structured system of communication that enables humans to convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings (Fowler, 2022). Language contains

written symbols, signed symbols, or spoken language, which follow conventions and rules to render meaning (Nystrand, 2023). It serves as a critical instrument for knowledge transmission, social connections, interaction, and cultural preservation (Tektigul et al., 2023).

Language and technology have been developing over time, creating and reflecting human culture since ancient times (Atkinson et al., 2025). However, in the modern era, technological mediation of language has been more widespread, with digital tools becoming key means of communication (Han, 2024). The accelerated technological advancement has resulted in text messaging, social media, and AI-driven communication tools that create new linguistic phrases (Alafnan, 2025). These inventions constantly transform language patterns and affect human social behavior, thoughts, and cultural practices (Tianying & Bogoyavlenskaya, 2023).

Technology integration in language use has led to complete linguistic shifts that produce digital dialects combined with online slang, together with code-switching across different platforms (Rohmana & Salsabil, 2024). Language models powered by artificial intelligence and machine translation systems have transformed multilingual communication but have raised moral issues about translation precision as well as possible human data security threats (Mohamed et al., 2024). Natural language processing (NLP), together with voice recognition software, has transformed human-device interactions by creating user-friendly methods for managing technological communication (Sumaiya et al., 2022).

The integration of language science and technology has fundamentally transformed audiovisual translation (AVT) and its adaptation of diverse media for linguistically distinct audiences (Granell & Chaume, 2023). Audiovisual translation has become more efficient and diverse owing to digital media and streaming platforms as well as AI-driven translation tools that enable subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over while providing audio descriptions for global audiences (Haris, 2024). In our study, we investigated the interplay between language, culture, and technology in the translation of *The Simpsons* series from English into Arabic.

Review of Recent Studies on Subtitling Culture-bound Terms

Several studies have investigated the subtitling of culture-bound terms from English to Arabic. Abdelaal (2019) examined the subtitling strategies used in subtitling *The American Pie* movie for Arabic-speaking audiences, focusing mainly on the subtitling strategies of culture-bound terms. The study adopted the typology of Pedersen (2005, 2011) and the quality assessment model by Pedersen (2017). The study found that subtitlers used a variety of subtitling strategies, including retention to convey nouns, euphemistic expressions, omissions, specifications, explication, generalization, and direct translation.

Similarly, Djoudi and Toubakh (2022) conducted a study on subtitling culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series from English to Arabic. The corpus contains the first 30 episodes of *The Simpsons* series. This study employed the Aixela's (1996) model of subtitling strategies and Newmark's (1988) framework of culture-bound terms. The study's findings revealed that six subtitling strategies were employed: transference, zero translation, direct copy, pun-to-pun, non-pun, and pun-to-pound. Interestingly, the study found that the subtitler encountered a variety of challenges in subtitling culture-bound terms, including food and clothing differences, religious references, ideological and cultural aspects, and temporal and spatial dimensions such as the maximum number of lines, their positions on the screen, and synchronization. The study concluded that the translation of culture-specific terms could be improved to enhance translation quality.

Sahari (2021) conducted a study on subtitling sensitive and cultural words in Hollywood films, from English to Arabic. The study showed that taboo words are pervasive in these movies, where they are produced in liberal and open contexts, posing a significant challenge for Arab subtitlers. The study attributed this challenge to Arabic cultural values and norms and to the conservativeness of Arabic society. The data comprised 90 Hollywood movies released between 2000 and 2018. The study employed Toury's (1995) descriptive translation theory and subtitling strategies of domestication and foreignization. The findings of this study revealed that Arab culture has a significant impact on subtitling culture-bound terms and taboo words to Arabic-speaking audiences. On the other hand, Subrata and Jumanto (2023) investigated the subtitling strategies in an animated movie *Coco*. The study used Newmark's (1988) cultural words and Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies. The data consisted of 100 culture-bound terms. The findings of the study showed that these terms can fall within the fields of ecology, material culture, social culture, gesture and habit, and organization.

Our study resembles Djoudi and Toubakh's (2022) and Sahari's (2021) studies in terms of investigating culture-bound types and subtitling strategies in translating culture-bound terms; however, it differs from their studies in that it investigates the subtitling strategies used by translators in addressing religious and cultural issues. In addition, Abdelaal (2019) employed Pedersen's (2005, 2011, 2017) quality assessment model. While the studies conducted by Djoudi and Toubakh (2022) and Subrata and Jumanto (2023) employed Newmark's (1988) theoretical framework, Sahari (2021) used Toury's (1995) descriptive translation theory. Our study employed Newmark's (1988) framework to classify culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series. Our study is similar to Subrata and Jumanto's (2023) and Djoudi and Toubakh's (2022) studies employing Gottlieb's (1992) theory of subtitling strategies and Newmark's framework of culture-bound terms.

Although Djoudi and Toubakh (2022) examined the strategies employed while translating culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series, research on identifying new strategies used to translate culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series remains rare. Our study addresses this gap by investigating new strategies employed in the translation of culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series. Our study enhances existing scholarship on translating culture-bound terms, filling a significant void in the literature on translation practices in the Arab world.

Method

Research Design

This research followed a qualitative descriptive design to give an explanation of the translation of culture-specific terms in *The Simpsons* series. The categorization of the culture-bound terms, as pointed out by Newmark (1988), and the outline of the subtitling strategies as presented by Gottlieb (1992), provided an organized way of recognizing and understanding the subtitling strategies. We employed qualitative analysis according to the categorization of Newmark (1988) of culture-bound words and Gottlieb (1992) of subtitling strategies. Since the dataset is audiovisual and limited in space and time, the analysis focused on subtitling strategies in particular, as opposed to translation processes at large. Digital content analysis was also used since the episodes and subtitles are digital audiovisual data, which required a systematic frame-in-frame review.

Corpus of the Study

The Simpsons series was chosen due to its abundance of cultural references, which correspond to the objectives of this study. Purposive sampling was utilized to find the cases with significant culture-bound information related to the research questions (Campbell et al., 2020; Patton, 2002). The English version of the series and its Arabic subtitles were analyzed to produce a total of 150 culture-bound terms. These words were subsequently coded in five categories based on Newmark's (1988) classification of culture-bound terms and put into analysis using Gottlieb's (1992) framework of subtitling strategies.

Data Collection

The data was composed of *The Simpsons* animated series and its Arabic subtitles. The episodes have been downloaded and watched on several occasions to maintain precision and contextualization. A comprehensive record was kept to encode every case of culture-bound expression along with situational context. The analysis was aimed at defining the nature of culture-restricted expression and the subtitling approaches used in translating these expressions to Arabic. A

subsequent evaluation of the effectiveness of these approaches was effective in imparting similar cultural significance to Arabic speakers.

Ethical Considerations

The study meticulously adhered to ethical considerations despite the public accessibility of *The Simpsons* series on YouTube. It complies with ethical standards for digital content analysis, ensuring respect for Western and Arab cultures, while valuing the academic significance of analyzing public discourse. In addition to employing descriptive and qualitative methods, the study used digital content analysis as a systemic analysis method to study the audiovisual content in the episodes of *The Simpsons* that can also be found online, the English dialogues and their corresponding Arabic subtitles as digital textual data.

Data Analysis

To analyze the culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series, the study adopted translation frameworks that helped achieve the objectives of the study and answer the research questions. In presenting the analyzed data, it is not feasible to include all 150 culture-bound expressions in full due to word limit constraints. Therefore, we have selected the expressions that provide the most clarity in illustrating the identified subtitling strategies and supporting our arguments.

Types of Culture-Bound Terms Based on Newmark's (1988) Framework

To answer the first research question regarding the types of culture-bound terms in *The Simpsons* series, we employed the integrated approach of Newmark's (1988) taxonomy of culture-bound terms, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Culture-bound Types*

Culture-Bound types	Definitions	Examples
1) Material expressions	They refer to materialistic issues like food, clothes, buildings.	The word “غامش” [<i>shemagh</i>] in Arabic is used to represent ‘ <i>keffiyeh</i> ’ in English, which stands for traditional Arab headscarf.
2) Social expressions	They are defined as expressions used by people on a particular social occasion to render a particular feeling.	The word “آيب” [<i>Ayb</i>] in Arabic is used to represent “disgrace” or ‘ <i>shame</i> ’ in English.

Culture-Bound types	Definitions	Examples
3) Religious expressions	They are defined as words that imply religious figures or symbols.	The utterance“ روبرم حجح, [Hajj Mabroor] in Arabic into ‘an accepted pilgrimage’ in English.
4) Terms of address	They are phrases or words employed to refer or address someone in a conversation to reflect their role in society, social status, or their relationship.	The word „حاجح, [Hagg] in Arabic is used to represent [Hajj] in English, which is honorific title that is used either for a person who completed a pilgrimage to Mecca or to denote respect or acknowledgment for a person.
5) Similes and metaphorical expressions	Similes are defined as figures of speech used to resemble unlike things using ‘as’ or ‘like’, while metaphors are used to resemble unlike things without using ‘as’ or ‘like’.	Simile: Source text (English): “He is brave as a lion.” → Arabic translation: «دسأل اك عاجش» [Shujaa' kal-asad]. Metaphor: Source text (English): “Does my marriage have to be something you can smell?” → Arabic translation: «نأ ي جاوز ل ه. نأ ي مش نوك ي» [Episode 1, 5:04].

(Source: Newmark, 1988, p. 103)

We selected this framework for its comprehensiveness and wide use in translation studies. This framework further provides a variety of culture-bound terms that might be encountered in subtitling cultural nuances from English to Arabic in *The Simpsons* series.

Data analysis revealed a discrepancy in the prevalence of culture-bound expressions used in *The Simpsons series, season 27*. The predominant culture-bound expressions identified were religious, comprising around 36 % of the dataset. Material expressions are less frequently found in *The Simpsons series, season 27*, compared to religious ones. They represented around 25 % of the sample. Moreover, data analysis indicated that the use of social expressions constituted 19 % of the recurrence rate, whereas metaphorical phrases included 12 %. The repetition rate of the terms of address was consistent at 8 %.

Subtitling Strategies-Framework of Culture-bound Terms

To answer the second research question regarding the subtitling strategies used to translate culture-bound terms, we employed Gottlieb’s (1992) taxonomy of subtitling strategies. The rationale behind adopting this framework is its comprehensiveness and widespread use in subtitling studies. This taxonomy consists of ten strategies, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Subtitling Strategies by Gottlieb (1992)

Subtitling Strategies	Definitions	Examples
1. Expansion	It means expanding the translation of the source text to the target language readers to guarantee their comprehension.	' <i>He is as sly as a fox</i> ' in English into «بلعث لاك ركام هنا» in Arabic (literally: "He is as cunning as a fox.")
2. Paraphrase	It means reformulating and reconstructing the syntactical nuances of the source text to the target language readers while maintaining the semantic meaning.	' <i>Dogged the bullet</i> ' in English into «لكاشملا بنجت» in Arabic (literally: "He avoided the problems.")
3. Transfer	It means translating the source text to the target language readers correctly and completely.	' <i>She resembles the flower</i> ' in English into «قبشت اهنا» «قدرولا» in Arabic (literally: "She resembles a rose.")
4. Imitation	It means imitating the translation of the source text utterance to the target language readers. The translation of proper nouns like places, countries, and names as well as product brands.	' <i>London</i> ' in English was translated into «ندنل» in Arabic (London)
5. Transcription	It means conveying the irregularities of the source text to the target text.	' <i>Bonjour</i> ' in French into «روجنب» in Arabic ('Good morning' in English)
6. Dislocation	It means faithfully rendering the translation that has a special effect in the target text. It entails preserving the same impact of the source text, particularly when it is essential and affects the meaning.	' <i>ooh</i> ' in English into «ووا» in Arabic (literally: "Ooh")
7. Condensation	As the name suggests, it means condensing i.e. shortening the source text without changing its meaning.	' <i>I am going to the library to buy some books</i> ' in English into «قبتكمل اىل بهذاس» in Arabic (literally: "I will go to the library.")

Subtitling Strategies	Definitions	Examples
8. Decimation	It is regarded as another aspect of condensation, which entails deleting the essential elements of the source text due to discourse speed issues.	' <i>I cannot believe that you did this to me, we have been together for 5 years, how can you do this to me!</i> ' in English into « <i>تُدح ام قدصاً ال</i> » in Arabic (literally: "I do not believe what happened!")
9. Deletion	It entails omitting some phrases or utterances from the source text.	' <i>Well, you know, I was, uh, thinking about it</i> ' in English into « <i>رَمَأل ا يف ركفا تنك</i> » in Arabic (literally: "I was thinking about it.")
10. Resignation	It occurs when the subtitler provides no translation leading to translation loss.	' <i>Let's go</i> ' in English is not translated in Arabic.

(Source: Gottlieb, 1992)

After identifying the typologies of culture-bound terms considering Newmark's (1988) taxonomy, we identified the strategies used to subtitle the culture-bound terms from English to Arabic. We then thoroughly investigated the subtitling strategies used by translators that addressed religious and cultural issues. We highlighted the decisions made by subtitlers, which contributed to preserving Arab cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices while subtitling *The Simpsons* series into Arabic. This step helped us answer the third research question.

Findings and Discussion

The findings indicate that *The Simpsons* series encompasses a range of religious, material, social, and metaphorical expressions, along with address expressions. The data analysis showed extensive use of subtitling strategies, such as transfer, expansion, dislocation, deletion, and imitation to communicate culture-bound terms to an Arabic-speaking audience. These strategies effectively communicated Arab cultural values, norms, and Islamic practices by omitting or moderating terms that could conflict with Islamic Arabic values and cultures.

Religious Expressions

This study found that 'religious expressions' were the most used culture-bound expressions in *The Simpsons* series. The highest percentage of the 150 identified items was religious expressions, making them the most common category of the dataset. Example (1), which states '*Angel investors*' into «*رتسفنآ لجنآ*» (Episode 10, 18:30) occurred in a context when investors chased Lize to buy shares from her own created application. This expression in Example (1) has religious

connotations because it metaphorically portrays “angels” as benevolent figures who provide financial support, which resembles how angels offer assistance and guidance in religious contexts. To render this religious expression, the translator uses imitation. The translator imitated the phonological aspects of the source text to the viewers’ target language, leading to a source language-oriented translation (Gottlieb, 1992). Similarly, Abdelaal’s (2019) findings showed the frequent use of imitation in subtitling. Although imitation preserves the original phonetic structure, it fails to effectively render cultural and religious significance to Arabic-speaking audience members. It is possible that the subtitler employed imitation because of the lack of an equivalent counterpart of this translation in Arabic. However, we argue that using culturally adaptive subtitling aligns with Arab cultural norms and values and guarantees that the term “*angels*” resonates with the viewers’ understanding of religious terms.

Example (2) reveals how subtitlers converted swear and offensive words into religious words such as the translation of “*Damn, that is a beautiful sunset!*” into “*يا لهلا اي*” (*Ya Ilahi, dhalika ghuroob shams jameel* – literally “Oh my God, that is a beautiful sunset!”) [Episode 6, 17:07]. This example was said by Homer’s friend, while he asked him to join him and his daughter to go to the island as he saw the sunset. In this example, the word “*damn*” is considered a mild swear word that denotes frustration, annoyance, or surprise. From a religious perspective, this term denotes the condemnation of hell. For Arab audiences, this word is regarded as offensive, particularly by religious people. Therefore, the Arab subtitlers used an euphemism in dealing with this offensive word by translating “*damn*” into “*يا لهلا اي*” (*Ya Ilahi* – “Oh my God”). In contrast, the rest of the phrase “*that is a beautiful day*” was translated by using literal translation. The subtitler’s decision to use euphemism is attributed to religious rules, which play a critical role in identifying expressions, behaviors, or words that are unacceptable to the audience (Alharthi, 2023). By revisiting the subtitling strategies proposed by Gottlieb (1992), we observe that the translator uses a combination of subtitling strategies, namely, dislocation and transfer. To clarify, ‘*damn*’ in Example (2) was translated by using dislocation to convey the same impact to the audience. In contrast, ‘*this is a beautiful sunset*’ in Example (2) was translated using a transfer subtitling strategy, which involves translating it without omitting, adding, or manipulating the textual information.

The subtitling strategies employed by the translator adequately adhered to Islamic and Arabic cultural norms. The dislocation strategy efficiently conforms to Arab religious norms and cultural values. This is accomplished by substituting a moderate English swear word with a socially acceptable utterance, thereby avoiding any offense to the religious or moral sensibilities of the viewers. The research conducted by Abdelaal (2019) and Alharthi (2023) substantiates that Arab subtitlers deliberately employ euphemisms and culturally regulated expressions to maintain a sense of propriety among viewers and to ensure

compliance with Arabic and Islamic conventions. Furthermore, transfer usage offers the audience a lucid comprehension of the intended meaning without distortion, a point also noted by Subrata and Jumanto (2023) in their analysis of subtitling strategies employed in animated movies.

A close examination of the translation shows that the subtitler used omission to deal with religious expressions that might negatively affect Arab viewers. In Example (3), "*What the hell does that mean, Grampa-son?*" was translated into "ما اللادي يا ني دالاي ك ل ذ ه ي ن ع ي ذ ل ا م ا" (*Ma alladhi ya'ni dhalik ya jadi? – "What does that mean, Grandpa?"*) [Episode 5, 10:29]. This scene features Bart Simpson talking to Grampa Simpson in a parody of Japanese philosophy and culture, emphasizing a cryptic reaction of Grampa. The English expression '*what the hell*' is a colloquial term to indicate disbelief, confusion, or frustration, and the term '*hell*' itself has a powerful religious connotation of the life after death. This detail was not included in the subtitle to prevent any negative religious connotations that could be offensive to the Arabic-speaking audience. Gottlieb (1992) defines deletion as the process of removing words or phrases in the source text, although this does not diminish the meaning of the source, which is precisely the situation in this instance.

In Example (3), the subtitler did not use the word hell in order to avoid introducing a term that had negative religious implications. This omission preserves the cultural sensitivity and accords the translation with the expectation of Arabic speaking audiences. The use of a deletion subtitling strategy aligns with Al-Shloul (2025), who argues that subtitlers employ omission when omitted content does not affect the overall meaning of the context. She adds that employing deletion in subtitling religious terms enables subtitlers to align with the time and space of the translation and maintain the essence of the message.

Material Expressions

The second most observed culture-bound expressions in *The Simpsons* series are material expressions. According to Newmark (1988), material expressions are defined as tangible artifacts or objects, such as food and drinks, clothes and accessories, houses and towns, and transport. In this series, we find a variety of materialistic expressions. Example (4), "مري فوس ي ل ح م ل ا ك ع ك ا ب" (*Bā'i'al-ka'k al-muhallā sawfa yarmī al-ka'k ghayr al-mabā'* – "*The sweet cake seller will throw out the unsold cakes*") [Episode 1, 11:24]. This example occurred in a context in which Homer said this to his new date after he and his wife Marge were going through a trial separation. From a cultural perspective, the word "*donut shop*" has connotations inherited from American fast-food culture. To elaborate, this example denotes a causal and common place for quick snacks, comfortable food, and social gatherings. Contextually, this reflects Homer's attachment to daily and familiar indulgences,

underscoring his lifestyle and personality. Nevertheless, the subtitler generalized the materialistic utterance to Arabic-speaking audiences into "الكعك الحلو" (*al-ka'k al-muhallā* – "sweet cake"). The use of generalization can be attributed to the fact that traditional Arabic-speaking regions might not have the same widespread donut shop culture.

Regarding the subtitling strategy used to render this material expression in Example (4), the translator used expansion. To elaborate, the translator expanded 'donut shop' into "بي حلو الكعك الحلو" (*Bā'i al-ka'k al-muhallā* – "sweet cake seller"). According to Gottlieb (1992), subtitlers expand some utterances mentioned in the subtitled content to guarantee that viewers can fully capture the intended meaning of the source text. This finding agrees with Djoudi and Toubakh (2022), who emphasized the frequent use of explication and preservation in subtitling *The Simpsons* series to an Arabic-speaking audience. In fact, the use of expansion complies with the norms of Arabic culture because it helps avoid referring to a particular food establishment that might not be widely recognized in Arabic-speaking regions. Simply put, the translator tried as much as possible to provide target-centered translation.

Social Expressions

Social expression is defined as the language used to articulate the institutional, social, and interpersonal realities that are unique to a specific culture (Newmark, 1988). In *The Simpsons* series, there is a variety of social expressions that have cultural connotations, such as in Example (5), which says "*where the heck is our smoker?*" It was translated into "أين خدوم هو ني؟" (*Ayna huwa mudakhinunā?* – "Where is our smoker?") [Episode, 2:18:16]. People use social expressions to express both emotions and perspectives. In this context, '*the heck*' serves the dual purpose of emphasizing the statement while simultaneously conveying both urgency and frustration along with surprise. Simpson makes this declaration by addressing both his household and spectators during the crowded barbecue contest. He expressed both confusion and disbelief about the mysterious disappearance of their cherished family smokers. Social expressions seem to resist literal translation, because they are deeply inherited in culture. Therefore, the subtitler omitted this culture-bound expression. Possibly, this term was omitted because of the lack of an equivalent counterpart in the target language, as well as to avoid ambiguity. The omission can also be attributed to the space and time constraints of subtitling. According to Gottlieb (1992), deletion is used when the deleted information does not affect the intended message of the source text, particularly when it is not essential for understanding the overall message.

When it comes to effectiveness, the use of a deletion subtitling strategy aligns with Islamic norms and cultural values and respect. In doing so, the subtitler provides a relatable and accessible translation to the Arabic-speaking audience without compromising the intended meaning.

Metaphorical Expressions

This section explores the metaphorical expressions in *The Simpsons* and the way they are translated into Arabic subtitles as per the taxonomy of Newmark (1988). In animated series, metaphors are commonly used to render complicated feelings, abstract concepts, or themes in a comprehensible and engaging manner for the audience. *The Simpsons* series contains a plethora of metaphorical expressions. Example (6) ‘*Does my marriage have to be something you can smell?*’ was translated into “هه مشش نأ نكمي عيش نوكي نأ يجاوز له” (*Hal zawāji an yakūna shay’an yumkin an tashummīhi?* – “Does my marriage have to be something you can smell?”) [Episode 1, 5:04]. This occurred when Marge was at the counselor’s office when discussing their struggling marriages. From a cultural perspective, the metaphor in Example (6) is associated with social perceptions, personal experiences, and relationships. In this example, the metaphor “*something you can smell*” denotes an unwanted level of exposure. This metaphor carries cultural connotations that may not be easily captured by culture. In Western culture, people tend to express their marriage relationships openly, unlike in Arab cultures where people are conservative in discussing marriage-related issues. Moreover, cultural perceptions of marriage in Arabic and Islamic cultures often advocate values such as social commitment and honor instead of sensory metaphors that are commonly found in Western culture. From a translational perspective, the subtitler opted for a transfer by maintaining the intended message of the source text without reformulating or adapting it (Gottlieb, 1992). Regarding effectiveness, this subtitling strategy might not fully convey the intended impact for Arabic-speaking audiences because of the use of literal translation. It is possible that the subtitler resorted to transfer because of the lack of an equivalent counterpart of the culture-bound expression in the target text. This translation could be improved by using paraphrasing to guarantee that the viewers are able to fully grasp the intended message such as translating it into “عيطتسي نأ ةجردل اسوملم ازمأ نوكي نأل ةجاحب يجاوز له” “هه مشسانل ا” [*Does my marriage need to be so tangible that people can smell it?*]. This finding aligns with Abdelaal (2019), who emphasized the use of direct translation in subtitling when the equivalent part of the culture-bound expression does not exist in the target text.

Terms of Address

Newmark (1988) defines terms of address as culture-bound terms that are used to refer to or address individuals in a particular cultural context. These terms encompass kinship terms, honorifics, and titles that reflect politeness, formality, hierarchy, or relationships. In *The Simpsons* series, we identified several address terms. In example (7) we find “ينلقن نأ عيطتست له، أبي” “(سواهل يمي) لزنم لىل” (*Abī, hal tastaṭī‘ an tuqillanī ilā manzil Milhāws?* – “Dad, can you drive me to Milhouse’s house?”) [Episode 1, 2:27]. This example

was said when Bart Homer's son asked his father to drive him, but he refused because he had been diagnosed with narcolepsy. From a cultural perspective, the utterance "dad," which is equal to the meaning of "أبي" in Arabic, functions as a kinship term of address. This is a manifestation of the Arabic social norms of respecting the authority of the parents and preserving a close family atmosphere where words such as "أبي" (*Abī - my father*) can be used to express both love and respect (respect to the father). The cultural significance of this term differs as Arabic often underscores formal respect and familial bonds, which makes the translation a culturally bound adaptation, thus preserving the intended relational dynamic. To approach this example from a translational perspective, the translator used transfer and imitation. In Example (7), the former was manifested through using direct translation without formulating or adapting the text as in translating "dad" into "أبي", whereas the latter was manifested through translating "Milhouse" into "سواهل يم" by imitating the phonological pronunciation of the name to the viewers. The findings of this study align with those of Subrata and Jumanto (2023) regarding the use of transfers in subtitling animated movies. However, our findings differ from those of Sahari (2021), who highlighted that adaptation is frequently used in subtitling. The findings of our study reveal that imitation is commonly employed.

With respect to effectiveness, the subtitling strategy effectively renders Arab cultural norms and values to Arabic-speaking audiences. This is evident in transferring the respect and familiarity of the kinship term and imitating the character's identity to guarantee audience connections and cultural relevance.

Conclusions and Implications

This study investigated the translation of *The Simpsons* series of season 27 from English to Arabic. Employing Newmark's (1988) and Gottlieb's (1992) taxonomy of subtitling strategies, we investigated culture-bound terms and subtitling strategies in the series. We also examined the effectiveness of these strategies in reflecting Arabic and Islamic cultural norms. The findings suggest that the series contains a variety of cultural expressions at the religious, materialistic, metaphorical, social, and address levels. In rendering these culturally laden expressions, the subtitler used deletions such as omitting the colloquial religious phrase "what the hell?" and the colloquial social phrase "where the heck?" to avoid religious and cultural sensitivity. This translation complies with Islamic and Arabic norms by guaranteeing appropriateness, while preserving the intended message. Our findings align with those of Alaa and Al Sawi (2023), who indicate that the subtitler can remove hyperbolic expressions that are unique to culture to save him/her from rendering cultural expressions that might be contextually or generally unknown to the target audience.

Our findings further show the use of transfer as in translating “*that is a beautiful sunset!*” into “*لي مچ س مش بورغ كل ذ*” and the metaphorical expression “*Does my marriage have to be something you can smell?*” into “*نك مچي ج اوز له*” “*ة؟ م مش ت نا عيش نو كي نا*”. Possibly, the translator decided to transfer the culture-bound expression because of the lack of an equivalent counterpart to the metaphorical phrase. This finding is consistent with Djoudi and Toubakh (2022), who highlight the use of transfer in subtitling cultural expressions in *The Simpsons* series. Although this translation conveys the whole meaning, it distorts the intended meaning owing to the use of literal translation, which causes ambiguity and leads to translation loss. The translator can compensate for the translation loss by using natural and contextual translations.

The findings of the study show that the subtitler used imitation as in imitating “*Angel investors*” into “*زرتس فال ج نا*”. A plausible justification for transferring these phrases to Arabic-speaking audiences could be attributed to the fact that there is no direct cultural or linguistic equivalent in Arabic, leading the subtitler to retain the original phonetic structure for recognition. This finding aligns with Obeidat and Abbadi’s (2024) findings, which show the frequent use of imitation in conveying culture-bound expressions in *Barbie* movies into Arabic. This translation is considered ineffective, incomprehensible, and misleading because it fully captures the cultural and religious significance of the term. Perhaps Arabic and Islamic culture made the subtitler transfer this term because it carries religious connotations that contradict Islamic values.

Besides, the analysis revealed that subtitlers resort to expanding the materialistic expressions as in translating “*donut shop*” into “*لي ج م ل ا ك ع ك ال ا ع ئ اب*”. Possibly, the lack of equivalent utterance to the term “*donut*” prompted the subtitler to add the word “*لي ج م*” to clarify the meaning for the viewers. This finding is like Djoudi and Toubakh’s (2022) findings that emphasize the use of expansion to compensate for the translation loss resulting from the translator’s unfamiliarity with the source text culture and his/her lack of experience. This subtitling decision is considered effective and accessible to Arabic-speaking audiences.

Furthermore, our findings indicate that the Arab subtitler resorted to tone down and dislocate the offensive word as in “*damn*” by translating it into “*اي ل ا*”. The removal of offensive words and the addition of religious ones clearly underscore Arab subtitlers’ attempts to foster Islamic and Arabic culture while preserving the intended meaning. This finding aligns with Sahari (2021), who argues that the subtitler endeavors to manipulate, domesticate, and tone down the cultural expressions to align with Arabic and Islamic values.

This study employs various theoretical frameworks, including Newmark’s (1988) taxonomy and Gottlieb’s (1992) subtitling strategies, to enhance the field by creating a systematic approach for analyzing cultural translations. The study of animated content shows that translating culture-specific expressions in animation is quite difficult, requiring more data and additional research methods

to improve subtitling strategies that keep cultural elements intact. Translators may consider the conclusions of this paper when addressing cultural aspects during the translation process.

However, this study has some limitations. It is limited to the subtitling of *The Simpsons* series season 27. Therefore, it cannot be generalized to other AVT practices. It is further confined to animated movies; thus, other genres are excluded. This study is confined to descriptive and qualitative analyses. In addition, there are aspects of digital content analysis systematically used to analyze the audiovisual information obtained in the episodes of *The Simpsons* found on online platforms. Analysis of the episodes was performed frame by frame, with an emphasis on the English conversations and their Arabic subtitles as textual artifacts in digital sphere. This method facilitated precise identification and classification of culture-specific words in their visual and linguistic contexts, and the decisions of subtitling were deciphered in terms of their multimodal representation. Moreover, the sample size of the study was restricted to 150 examples. Based on these limitations, the research recommends replicating it with a larger sample size to generate robust conclusions about the findings. We further recommend future investigations to use other frameworks for culture-bound types, such as Pedersen's (2005, 2011) culture-bound typologies and Aixela's (1996) model of subtitling strategies.

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NATURAL VS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NEURAL MACHINE TRANSLATION IN SPECIALISED TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: *The current study aims to identify the differences between human and hybrid translation, analyse the impact of Neural Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence on the final product, and evaluate the performance of two groups of students translating specialised texts. The first group relies on advanced technology, utilising both Neural Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence, while the second group depends solely on natural intelligence. The results indicate that technology does not necessarily ensure quality in specialised translations. The quality assurance process shows that high-quality translation is only achieved by experienced translators who are fluent in the target language and possess a strong understanding of the subject matter. Such individuals are less prone to making inadequate translation decisions under NMT influence and are more likely to implement necessary modifications during post-editing.*

Keywords: *Machine Translation (MT), Neural Machine Translation (NMT), Post-Editing, Human Translation (HT), Hybrid Translation*

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Introduction

Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are now dominating the translation industry. Today, translating any technical or administrative document is not only assisted by computer-aided translation tools but also often performed using Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and subsequently post-edited. Over the past two years, the process has become increasingly integrated with AI. Like any other technological breakthrough, society is still learning how to implement and harness it, not only in translation services but also in daily life. It is often demonised and blamed for potential future drawbacks. One such concern that has recently drawn much attention is that progress in AI will impact the employment prospects of many professionals, especially translators, leading to significant job losses. A survey conducted by the SOA POLICY TEAM found that “[O]ver a third of illustrators (37%) and over 4 in 10 translators (43%) say the income from their work has decreased in value because of generative AI” (SOA Policy Team, 2024). These findings are further supported by the study of Frey and Llanos-Paredes (2025), who report that “the adoption of Google Translate contributed to a 0.71 percentage point reduction in translator employment growth, translating into an estimated loss of more than 28,000 jobs over the 2010-2023 period” (p. 20). According to them, the situation will likely worsen as NMT technologies continue to develop. However, the increasing demand for better, faster, and more affordable translation services, driven by the need for expanded commercial communication, which has led to the improvement in MT quality and recent advancements in AI, is unlikely to reverse. Undoubtedly, the future of automation and the narrowing performance gap between humans and machines (Hassan et al., 2018; Moneus & Sahari, 2024) will prompt questions and more research.

A remark made by *The Economist* in 2023 has raised further concerns. The statement that “AI could make it less necessary to learn foreign languages” (Johnson, 2023) is even more distressing, as it reinforces technology’s role as the sole means of communication in the future. In the long run, such a policy and development will most likely lead not to unlimited freedom of speech, expression, and communication, but, on the contrary, to increased control and regulation.

Pym (2024) uses a colourful illustration to highlight these concerns, suggesting that soon after people stop believing in the future of human translation, students will cease enrolling in language and translation degrees, professors will lose their jobs, and consequently, research in translation studies will come to an end.

However, for translators engaged in specialised translation, NMT and AI are tools that are here to stay. Therefore, the main concern revolves around the use and implications of these tools. As a result, the field needs further investigation into the widely publicised increases in productivity and turnover in NMT and post-editing, as well as their impact on the quality of the translation output.

Quality, serving as a marker of professional and dependable translation, remains particularly vital across different domains. For example, translation in highly specialised fields, such as legal and medical documents, still relies on human expertise (Ramos, 2015; Lee, 2023).

It is this situation that prompted the current research, which aims to examine the similarities and differences between NMT and HT approaches, as well as their quality.

Previous research in the field

Given the significance of AI for translators' work and the ever-growing apprehensions about its role in the translation industry and for translators in the future, the study contributes to a growing body of NMT and AI-oriented research. However, advances in automation led to various definitions of translation quality (Gaspari et al., 2015). Drugan (2013) highlights that there is no uniform, objective way to measure quality, but there is an abundance of error typology models that provide quantitative indicators of quality (Lommel et al., 2014). The latter categorise the traditional evaluation of quality conducted by bilingual reviewers as subjective, and find metrics developed specifically for a given translation project as unreliable. They point out that though customisation is necessary, consistency and interchangeability are desirable. In response to this variation, Lommel et al. (2014) developed MQM. MQM stands for Multi-dimensional Quality Metrics, which is based on the LISA QA Model (Dillinger & Lommel, 2004). The study defines the metrics as a flexible system that can be used to evaluate the quality of any translation (human or machine-generated) and any source text, and even to identify issues in the source text.

In their study, Lommel et al. elaborate that MQM addresses the shortcomings of previous quality assessment models and evaluates the entire project life cycle using a hierarchical listing of 114 specific issues. The upgraded 2.0 version of MQM (available at <https://themqm.org/about-us/>) enables detailed error analysis through a hierarchical tree structure whose categories mirror many of the quality assurance indicators in platforms like *Phrase* and *Trados*. MQM 2.0 has eight categories: terminology, accuracy, linguistic conventions, style, locale conventions, audience appropriateness, design and markup, and custom, which list 127 specific issues. Among them, linguistic conventions, design, and markup appear to account for the most issues. As Lommel et al. (2014) observed, linguistic issues and formatting seem to be central to the model.

The model's accuracy and adaptability make it particularly suitable for the current study, enabling a well-grounded evaluation.

As it was mentioned, due to the significance of the topic, there are many studies in the field of human vs AI and/ or NMT and Large Language Models discussing

the results of the use of AI for specialised translation or even fiction (He et al., 2024; Moneus & Sahari, 2024; Alkhofi, 2025; Awashreh & Aboeisheh, 2025; Martos et al., 2025; Doan, 2025; Nedelcheva, 2025). Moneus and Sahari's 2024 study is comparable to the current one and also evaluates the quality of AI translations, identifying differences between AI-generated and human translations. However, the primary concern of their research is identifying differences between human translation results and those of generative AI (ChatGPT, ChatSonic). Therefore, it does not compare human translation from scratch with human post-edited NMT and AI, a crucial consideration for the future of translation that the industry should consider, given its impact on quality. The current study tests whether post-edited NMT, further backed by AI (i.e., hybrid translation), has the same high quality as human translation and under what circumstances. Another dissimilarity between this study and the other recent studies is the choice of domain. The majority of recent research discusses legal text translation, which has long been shaped by requirements for human intervention, understanding, and legal expertise (Lee, 2023).

The results of Moneus and Sahari's (2024) study indicate that while AI translation is undeniably faster and more cost-effective, it cannot deliver a human-quality product as a stand-alone tool. The reason is that specific contexts prevent it from properly reflecting legal terminology, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances. Therefore, it has limitations that human translation does not.

Research Questions

Based on this, the current paper compares the translations of two groups of students training to become translators. The first group translates specialised texts using *Phrase*, a cutting-edge translation and localisation platform that streamlines the process by harnessing NMT and AI. In the company's words, *Phrase* "automates the selection of the most effective translation services, incorporates brand terms, and scores content quality based on an array of context and circumstances" (Phrase, 2025). While the first group utilises technology, the second translates from scratch using only a word processor.

The study thus aims to identify differences between human and hybrid translation, analyse the effects of NMT and AI on the final product, assess the performance of both groups, and evaluate the need for post-editing in specialised translation.

Unfortunately, the nature of the study poses some limitations. As the participants in one of the groups complete their projects without the use of any translation technology tool, the duration of the translation and revision stages of their projects cannot be measured. This restricts the ability to compare human and hybrid translation in terms of productivity.

Methods

To achieve this, the study relies on a corpus of 33,140 words compiled from the translations of five short academic texts (publication guidelines for two journals, a preface and an *About Us* section for a journal, and a call for papers). These were translated by twenty third- or fourth-year students specialising in either English Studies or Applied Linguistics. All texts followed a translator–reviser workflow model. In it, depending on the translation type (human or hybrid) the first student served as either the translator or post-editor, while the second student had to revise. All projects were to be completed and delivered within seven days.

The domain, texts, their length, the number of participants in the experiment, and the due date were determined by the client, an internal body of the higher education institution. As a result, the translated texts provide a clear picture of the complexity and diversity of the language in specialised texts and offer a glimpse into the translation procedures used by the two groups, thereby revealing their approaches to the texts. According to House (1997), “different views of translation lead to different concepts of translational quality, and hence different ways of assessing quality” (p. 1). Thus, the criteria for translation quality evaluation differ in different theories. Here, however, quality assurance was conducted through reviews and proofreadings of the texts, executed independently by two university professors using MQM.

For the purposes of the study, the term quality assurance is defined as “systems and processes used to help create or maintain quality” (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013, p. 95). It is formed through quality control and quality assessment (Mossop, 2020). Ramos’s (2015) study presents an excellent example of a quality evaluation methodology. It offers criteria for evaluating texts, which he defines as suitable for human translation or for AI-generated translation. It addresses semantic accuracy and consistency, the adequacy of translation decisions regarding terminology, phraseology, genre conventions, the microtextual level, and the cohesion of the text, its syntax, punctuation, etc., all united under the general linguistic correctness. It also provides a grading scheme, which defines the results:

Excellent (A/5)	Maximum accuracy and consistency, adequate decisions according to the legal conditions and communicative situation; no linguistic errors
Acceptable (B/4)	Only some minor inaccuracy, inconsistency, inadequate decision or linguistic error not affecting main functions or microtextual priorities.
Borderline (C/3)	Inadequate decisions hinder main functions or microtextual priorities; significant linguistic error or several minor ones (e.g. punctuation problems)
Poor (D/2)	Major problems of accuracy, consistency, adequacy or linguistic correctness even if the text is readable
Unacceptable (E/1)	Inaccurate content, systematically inadequate decision-making and serious linguistic errors

(Ramos, 2015, p. 25).

However, the indicators used to assess the quality of the translation as excellent, acceptable, borderline, poor or unacceptable seem vague. Issues are not explained in detail, leading to decisions that seem subjective and based on overall impressions of the text.

To this end, the study adopts MQM, which enables a more precise assessment of specific translation issues, and then uses Ramos's grading scheme to define the results.

Following the aforementioned procedure, each translation is submitted for quality assurance in accordance with the MQM typology and receives a mark.

Lastly, the study also draws on another typology, Pym's translation solutions for many languages (2016). It seeks to describe the translation procedures used by participants in the two groups, to examine differences between all-human and hybrid translation, and to provide an explanation for the results. The decision to use a translation procedure analysis was prompted by Al-Qinai's statement that the "tendency to ignore the process of decision-making lies behind the lack of objectivity in translation assessment" (Al-Qinai, 2000, p. 497).

Cruise mode (normal use of language skills, reference resources, parallel texts, intuition - anything prior to bump mode - so no special solutions are needed)

Copying	Copying Words	Copying Sounds Copying Morphology Copying Script ...
	Copying Structure	Copying Prosodic Features Copying Fixed Phrases Copying Text Structure ...
Expression Change	Perspective Change	Changing Sentence Focus Changing Semantic Focus Changing Voice ...
	Density Change	Generalization/Specification Explication/Implication Multiple Translation Resegmentation ...
	Compensation	New Level of Expression New Place in Text (notes, paratexts) ...
	Cultural Correspondence	Corresponding Idioms Corresponding Culture-Specific Items ...
Content Change	Text Tailoring	Correction/Censorship/Updating Omission of Content Addition of Content ...

Pym's typology (2016, p. 220)

Data Analysis

The first part of the analysis looks at the texts generated, post-edited, and further revised in *Phrase*. Since the study participants had no prior experience with such texts and no translation memories were available for the project, all segments were machine-translated and then post-edited. The auto-select tool in

Phrase, which chooses the best NMT engine based on each job's domain and language pair, supports nine NMT engines: *Amazon Translate*, *DeepL*, *Google Translate*, *Microsoft Translator*, *Phrase Next GenMT*, *Phrase NextMT*, *Rozetta Translate*, *Tencent*, and *Widn.AI*. However, *DeepL* was the most frequently used source for the majority of the segments.

The analysis shows that three of the projects can be classified as acceptable according to Ramos (2015). The individual jobs (using *Phrase* terminology) in these projects have only minor inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and inadequate decisions. MQM highlights errors that can be categorised as issues in terminology, accuracy, linguistic conventions, style, or audience appropriateness.

Wrong terms are rarely encountered. Some projects used *summary* instead of *abstract* for a scientific paper, and *society* instead of *association* for the Association of Writers. Others used *Technical Requirements* where *Publication Guidelines* should have been used, and *Basic Steps* instead of *Submissions Basics* or *Technical Requirements*. *Departmental editor/ department editor/ Editor-in-Chief* appeared instead of *editor*. The situation is similar to the *Literature Section*, which is generally referred to as *References*. Further example is *the Unified format of electronic publications*, which should have been translated as *Submission Guidelines*. The analysis indicates that these examples are clearly produced by copying the structure of the original term.

Issues with accuracy were also common in these projects. They were represented by the overtranslation of Bulgarian book titles. Ivelina Savova's book „Съвременни графити (лингвистичен аспект)“ was turned into *Modern graffiti (linguistic aspect)* instead of being transliterated as *Savremenni grafiti (lingvistichen aspect)*. The same happened with several other books whose titles were also translated, where copying the sounds should have been used: Savova, I., Dobрева, Sn. *Bulgarian syntax. Learning aid for students.*; Popova, V. 2017a. *The early ontogeny of event modality.*; Bosilkov, K. 1981. *Interaction between the traditional and the new in the early stage of the formation of the New Bulgarian literary language.*

Such errors result from automatic MT-generated translation; however, due to the limited experience of the translator and reviewer alike, the issues were neither identified nor corrected.

Another type of accuracy issue involves the translation of entity names that should remain in Bulgarian. The analysis found that the name of *Шуменски университет „Епископ Константин Преславски“* was translated on the institution's letterhead and logo, which changed them.

The analysis identified some punctuation errors, as students followed the source text's punctuation rather than the target language conventions. However, these errors were not deemed crucial to understanding the texts.

The most common issue across all the projects was white spaces. Leading and trailing spaces (using *Phrase* terminology) appeared in projects of both acceptable and borderline quality. They were likely the result of the students' insufficient experience with *Phrase* and their habit of translating from scratch using word processors or pen and paper.

Finally, some sentences, even in projects with acceptable quality, had an awkward, unidiomatic style and language-dependent logic. The translation, although post-edited, still retained too much of the MT-generated literal translation of the source segment:

Текстовете за отпечатване трябва да се предадат най-късно до 1 септември 2024г. на CD или по e-mail. – Texts that are to be printed must be submitted by September 1, 2024. on CD or by e-mail.

The latter are typically caused by copying words or structures from the source text, when cultural correspondence or a change in perspective would have been more suitable. All these mistakes were generated and inherited from the NMT and later approved by the post-editor, who lacked sufficient experience and was misled by the NMT and AI results.

Not surprisingly, none of the projects exhibited any significant formatting issues. Thanks to the advanced software and quality assurance tools within the translation environment, even instances of missing tags did not impact the formatting of the target text.

However, despite using the same resources, the other two projects were rated as borderline, according to Ramos's (2015) classification. The analysis shows that the projects in this group exhibit all the errors found in the previous group, but their frequency and number are significantly higher. In addition to the higher percentage of the aforementioned terminology, accuracy, linguistic conventions, and stylistic issues, these projects also have additional problems: omissions and a greater number of character formatting errors.

For example, *библиография* is translated into the target text as *bibliography* rather than as *references*. Multiple mistakes were found in the name of the institution, which is translated instead of being transliterated or transcribed: „Еп. Константин Преславски” – “Ер. “BISHOP KONSTANTIN PRES LAVSKI”. Even more concerning is that the title of the University's patron was repeated twice in consecutive segments, first transliterated and then translated. Many segments exhibit an awkward, unidiomatic style due to the overly literal translation of the source text:

списание – разликата спрямо правилата при книга е, че с курсив се изписва наименованието на списанието, броят и съответните страници на цитираната публикация. – journal - the difference from

the rules for a book is that the name of the journal, the number and the corresponding pages of the cited publication are written in italics.

The array of minor and major linguistic errors, coupled with poor translation decisions, creates difficulties for the reader and hinders the main functions of the text.

While some low-quality results can be explained by a lack of extensive experience in a translation environment, the rest cannot be solely attributed to this factor. An interesting fact is that, despite all students using the same resources, some projects were deemed acceptable, while others were classified as borderline, according to Ramos's (2015) categorisation. A plausible explanation may be the competency of the translators, post-editors, and reviewers involved in the study. A more detailed analysis of the participants reveals that the teams responsible for delivering high-quality translations consisted of two types of students. While the MT post-editing was performed by less experienced students whose competence could be assessed as that of independent users according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the revision was carried out by more experienced users. The latter are qualified as proficient users. The teams that delivered projects assessed as borderline included inexperienced translators and reviewers whose competence was equivalent to B2 according to the CEFR. Therefore, participants in the second group were more inclined to rely on NMT rather than their own experience and knowledge.

The second stage of the analysis examines texts translated by humans from scratch, using only a word processor.

The results of this stage, however, reveal a similar division. Namely, the group of inexperienced and less skilled translators and revisers relied on translation procedures such as copying words and copying structure. As a result, sections of the texts were almost identical to those generated by the NMT in the first phase of the project. This suggests that the translators in this group relied on the same translation procedures as NMT. Consequently, they made similar mistakes to those detected in the projects of inexperienced post-editors.

As a result, the most commonly used translation procedure among the students is copying structure, i.e., literal or word-for-word translation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995), even though perspective change, cultural correspondence, or density change would have been more appropriate translation procedures. For example:

Целта на списание „ЛитерМедия“ в самото начало е да популяризира литературоведски и медийни научни изследвания.

The aim of “LiterMedia” magazine at the very beginning was the popularization of scientific researches related to literacy and media.

and

...в огледалото на Запада и междуславянското общуване.

...*through the lens of the West and inter-Slavic communication.*

...който си постави амбицията да бъде калейдоскопичното лице на живота във ФХН, като онагледява и озвучава този живот.

...which aspired to be a kaleidoscopic reflexion of life within the Faculty of Humanities, by illustrating it visually and auditorily.

Similar to the previous set of projects, these also involve issues related to terminology and linguistic conventions. In them, alternative words were used instead of the approved terms: *volume/magazine* instead of *journal*, *thematic cores* instead of *topics*, *Slavdom* instead of *Slavism*. Punctuation was omitted or incorrect, and there were spelling issues (see the previous examples): *deadline* (deadline) and *turkologists* (Turkologists), *reflexion* (reflection), *lenght* (length), etc.

In contrast, projects whose translators and/or reviewers were proficient in the language were rated as having acceptable quality. The proportion of terminological, accuracy, linguistic conventions, and style issues found in these projects was similar to that in the texts translated with *Phrase* using AI and NMT. What sets the acceptable-quality projects produced in the two phases of the study apart is the markedly higher number of character formatting issues in those translated from scratch.

The final indicator examined in the study is editing time. Editing time is frequently cited as a key factor in the use of NMT in translation over recent years (Ramos, 2015; Choudhury & McConnell, 2014; Mossop, 2007; Moneus & Sahari, 2024). However, reliable information about this indicator can only be obtained for projects generated through *Phrase* TMS, where the system records editing time in seconds. The analysis of this data shows that revisers spent between 16 and 133 minutes working on all four files in the project, which totalled 13365 characters/ 2145 words/ 8.51 pages.

Results

The results of the first phase of the study show that, although all participants used the same resources and the same NMT engines provided by *Phrase*, the quality of the translations varies from acceptable to borderline. These findings can only be explained by the experience of the translators acting as post-editors or reviewers of the project. As a result, it highlights the importance of humans in ensuring translation quality. A human translator or reviser understands the meaning of the text, its purpose, cultural nuances, and specific writing style. Even more importantly, humans consider the target readership, which allows for accurate communication not only of the message but also of its tone. Occasional inaccuracies in NMT would not mislead a qualified translator, post-editor, or

reviser, who would make the necessary adjustments to produce a high-quality translation.

The second stage of the project offers insights into the parallels between the NMT approach and that of linguists. It indicates that experienced linguists utilise a range of translation solutions. Meanwhile, translators lacking training and language proficiency predominantly depend on copying mechanisms, such as copying words and structure from the source document. The aforementioned approach aligns with NMT's method in these cases. This can be seen as a demonstration not only of the progress of NMT technology but also of its time and cost efficiency.

The final metrics analysed in the study relate to the time spent on the project. Editing time, however, can only be obtained for NMT and AI-assisted projects. Information about the total time spent on both the translation and revision stages of human translation would have provided a clearer understanding of the results and revealed any connection between time and quality. Nevertheless, despite the lack of data for all projects, the analysis indicates that students with limited experience in the field can produce an acceptable-quality translation of five texts, totalling eight and a half pages, in less than two and a half hours.

Conclusion

The current study once again demonstrates that the gap between AI, NMT engines, and human translation is narrowing, and that the technology can readily replace less experienced translators. With advances in AI and its increased use to improve NMT, the gap is undoubtedly closing.

However, the results of the current study show that cutting-edge technology does not guarantee quality in specialised translations. Quality assurance proves that translation quality is maintained only by experienced translators with excellent command of the foreign language and a strong understanding of the subject matter. Such individuals are less susceptible to poor translation decisions made by NMT and are more likely to make necessary changes in documents. They rely more on perspective and density adjustments as well as on cultural correspondence rather than simply copying words and structure from the source document. However, combining NMT, AI, and linguists' post-editing with extensive experience streamlines translation quality, enabling higher-quality translations in less time.

The results of the study show that language training should not become obsolete, but future translators must be trained to work with NMT and AI to deliver high-quality post-editing. Although specialised translation across various fields still requires human translators to ensure quality, translators should be encouraged to develop skills that machines cannot replicate. Such skills and services demand

a solid understanding of source and target cultures, traditions, and specificities, as well as creativity and domain-specific knowledge that remain beyond the reach of technology.

In conclusion, despite advances in NMT and AI, the disparity between human and machine results remains significant, and the human factor is indispensable for delivering quality translations. Though NMT and AI are here to stay, language education and translator training are not to be underestimated.

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REVISITING JOHN DONNE'S METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE IN "MEDITATION 17": A HERMENEUTIC READING

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Abstract: John Donne (1572-1631) was the leading poet of the metaphysical school of poetry in the 17th century. His mastery of using extended metaphors, also termed "metaphysical conceits," manifests itself not only in his secular and religious poems, but also in his sermons. This paper intends to revisit centuries-long influence of Donne's rich metaphorical language through a close reading of "Meditation 17." The claim of the paper is that the unique stylistic and content based features of Donne's multi-layered metaphors moving from the individual to the communal and conveying the universal themes of life and death and the shared human experience surpass temporal and cultural boundaries. Thus, the ultimate aim of this paper is to draw attention to the enduring quality of the metaphors Donne employs in "Meditation 17" as the aesthetics of the compelling interaction between the individual and the communal appeals to the literary taste of even contemporary readership. The theoretical frame of this paper draws largely on Schleiermacher's theory of modern hermeneutics.

Keywords: John Donne, extended metaphor, "Meditation 17", modern hermeneutics, life and death, unity of humankind

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Introduction

In *A Selection from the Prose of John Donne*, Rivers Scott (1997) presents Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, or *The Devotions* (1624) as they are often called "one of most peculiar hybrids in English or any other literature, an amalgam of religion, medical reportage and current affairs, given coherence by the power and strangeness of one man's temperament" (p. xvii). Donne's sermon titled "Meditation 17," which is taken from *The Devotions*, mainly focuses on the themes of mortality and unity of human beings and their relations to God and theological matters. In the sermon, Donne's use of extended metaphors often categorised as "metaphysical conceits," allows him to create a unique imagery – the layers of which span a comparison of human existence to a book written by God, the author, individuals to inseparable parts of a continent, rather than isolated islands, and human suffering to buried treasure – addresses such common timeless human concerns that still appeal to contemporary readers. Based on Friedrich Schleiermacher's (2010) theory of modern hermeneutics, this paper revisits the metaphorical language Donne employed in "Meditation 17." Schleiermacher's (2010) hermeneutic theory emphasizes the dual process of textual analysis: understanding a work through its grammatical structure and uncovering the author's psychological intent. By applying this approach, the study attempts to lay bare how Donne's metaphors establish a dialogue between the individual and the collective, emphasising the idea that personal suffering and mortality are directly connected to the broader human experience. The central focus of this study, Donne's "Meditation 17," continues to appeal to modern-day readers due to its stylistic and content-based features capturing universal aspects of even present human existence. Through a close reading of Donne's extended metaphors, this paper presents Donne's timeless insights into the unchanging cycle of human life.

Modern Hermeneutics and Friedrich Schleiermacher

German philosopher, classical philologist, and Protestant theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is regarded as the founder of modern general hermeneutics which the thinker himself called "the art of understanding and interpreting discourse through systematic procedures" (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 520). Schleiermacher's intention was to move hermeneutics further away from the interpretation of biblical or classical text by developing a systematic procedure that is applicable to all texts. His primary aim was to avoid misunderstandings while interpreting a text of any kind. According to the 1959 edition of Schleiermacher's lecture notes titled "Outline of the 1819 Lectures," the first step of textual understanding requires that the interpreter must fully understand the reciprocal relation between the author's thoughts and language that shape and modify each other. It is only after this process of simultaneous comprehension that the interpreter can fulfil the two major tasks

of interpretation properly. Schleiermacher explains the two major requirements of textual interpretation as: “to comprehend the language and historical culture of a text (grammatical interpretation) and to reconstruct the author’s purpose (psychological or technical interpretation)” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 521). Schleiermacher divides texts into two categories as “objective texts” and “subjective texts.” While objective texts such as histories and epics, require a minimum of psychological interpretation and a maximum of grammatical interpretation, subjective texts like personal letters and lyrics need more psychological than grammatical interpretation (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522).

Then, the philosopher defines four types of positive hermeneutical reconstruction as the only way to know the author’s purpose; among them, specifically the two types that are relevant to this study: subjective historical reconstruction, which “explores the text as the product of the author’s soul, and subjective divinatory reconstruction that attempts to determine how the process of writing affects the writer’s inner thoughts” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522). For Schleiermacher, interpretation is “an art of understanding, and the act of a living intuiting person [interpreter] gifted with foreknowledge [divination] and experience of life as well as linguistic and cultural competence” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522). However, modern hermeneutists like Gadamer and Ricoeur not just expand on Schleiermacher’s theory but also find flaws in it. For instance, Gadamer criticises Schleiermacher for disregarding the historical context and the prejudices of the interpreter (Gjesdal, 2009, p. 148). On the other hand, to Ricoeur (2016), “to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the orient of the text” (p. 123). Ricoeur’s theory of interpretation acknowledges the interrelationship between the assumptions made from the interpretation and that which is already known by the interpreter. This thinker asserts that the true object of interpretation is understanding the ideas constituting the content of the work under scrutiny; therefore, less emphasis must be put on its author. Nevertheless, the methodology of textual analysis used in this work is based on a synthesis of Schleiermacher’s (2010) theory on grammatical and psychological interpretation.

John Donne in the Context of Early 17th-Century English Literature

Here lies a king, that ruled as he thought fit

The universal monarchy of wit;

Here lie two flamens, and both those the best:

Apollo’s first, at last the true God’s priest (Carew, 1993, p. 1698).

The 17th-century Cavalier poet Thomas Carew’s elegiac poem titled “An Elegy upon the Death of Paul’s, Dr. John Donne” pays tribute to John Donne’s unmatched place in English poetry. Carew’s ending epitaph, which is given

as an epigraph to this part of the paper, puts particular emphasis on Donne's extraordinary poetic skills by equating him with Apollo, the Greek god of poetry, and implying that Donne is granted a divine gift. The "two flamens" (priests of the Roman religion) in line 3 is a reference to Donne's two vocations, i.e. to his being a poet and a priest. Thus, Carew not only praises the perfection of Donne's wit but also presents him as a true devotee to both of his vocations. Carew claims in the last line of the epitaph that John Donne was the best and true servant of both Apollo and God. According to the first part of Carew's long elegy, poetry was orphaned with the death of Donne, while the English language went bankrupt and lost its tune:

Have we no voice, no tune? Didst thou dispense

Through all our language both the words and sense?

Tis a sad truth. ... (Carew, 1993, p. 1696).

The subsequent lines of the second part of the elegy convey the poet's grief stemming from the loss of such a genius whom Carew associates with mythological figures like Prometheus and Orpheus, as well as with famous Greek lyric poets like Anacreon and Pindar. Carew claims that the Promethean breath allowed Donne to reinvigorate the "Delphic choir," that is the choir of poets inspired by Apollo. This part not only includes the striking metaphysical conceit through which Carew draws an analogy between poetry and Donne's original artistry, but also directs a severe critique to the unskilled poets of the period. At the beginning of the second part, Donne is depicted as the chief landscape artist responsible for maintaining the harmony and tune of the well-trimmed garden of poetry. Hence, Donne cleansed all the "pedantic weeds" that invaded and destroyed the harmony of the "Muses' garden"; the "pedantic weeds" were bad poets whose works were mere imitations of earlier poetry:

The Muses' garden, with pedantic weeds

O'erspread, was purged by thee; the lazy seeds

Of servile imitation thrown away,

And fresh invention planted; thou didst pay

The debts of our penurious bankrupt age – (Carew, 1993, p. 1697).

To Carew, Donne's innovative creativity muted the voice of bad poets and fertilised imaginative powers of the talented ones who were producing in the 17th century. The rest of Carew's lines suggest that Donne's literary craftsmanship was strongly connected to his erudition as well as to the power of his metaphorical language making his audience easily comprehend the most abstract ideas and/or the most complex experiences.

Thomas Carew's poetry is deemed to be combining the classical touch of Ben Jonson, the poetic master of the Cavalier poets, and the influence of John Donne, the leading metaphysical poet. We have selected several lines from Carew's long elegy to open this discussion for it includes intertwined metaphysical conceits worthy of commemorating John Donne's unique mastery of creating extended metaphors – also called “metaphysical conceits” – in his prose work, “Meditation 17.” Concerning the significance and literary merit of these two grand names of the early 17th-century English literature, J.B. Leishman (1965) states that “Both Jonson and Donne were superiors, and both seem to have been well aware of their superiority, but Donne, though far more urbane, was a much more superior person than Jonson, and except superficially, much less imitable” (p. 13). Obviously, for Leishman, Donne's poetic capabilities, his original voice and the inventions of his rich imagination far exceed those of Jonson.

Prior to the analysis of Donne's characteristic use of metaphysical conceits in “Meditation 17,” a brief refresher on definition of the term “metaphysical conceit” might be useful. “Conceit” is defined as “a concept or image [...] which establishes a striking parallel between two very dissimilar things or situations” (Abrams, 1993, p. 32). M. H. Abrams attributes the term “metaphysical conceit” to John Donne and to other metaphysical poets of the 17th century. It is Samuel Johnson who “established the term [metaphysical] in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81) more or less permanently as a label” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 508). Abrams (1993) quotes Samuel Johnson's definition, which describes metaphysical conceit, somewhat disapprovingly, as “wit which is a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike [...]. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together” (p. 33) in a conceit. In a broad sense, Johnson's definition of the metaphysical conceit might be interpreted as the harmony of disharmony, which brings together two seemingly incompatible experiences, ideas, or objects to make up a novel and striking image. According to John T. Guthrie (1980), Aristotle's definition of metaphor, which is based on “resemblance between dissimilar things” [falls short] “because it cannot distinguish between literal similarity, metaphorical relation, and nonsense ...” (p. 640). However, it is observed that Samuel Johnson's definition of metaphysical conceit, also called “extended metaphor,” perfectly fits the characteristics of the conceits Donne employs in “Meditation 17.” As Steve Oswald and Alain Rihs (2014) suggest, the ultimate function of “extended metaphors may fulfil the requirements of epistemic vigilance and lead to the stabilisation of a belief” (p. 133). Like many rhetorical figures, Oswald and Rihs (2014) add, “[metaphors] are believed to be particularly effective, sometimes more than literal formulations, when it comes to convincing an audience” (p.134).

“Meditation 17”

The upheavals of the 17th century resonate in John Donne’s turbulent tough life. According to Rivers Scott (1997), “he was a true Renaissance man, paradoxical, thrusting, litigious as was his age” (p. xiii). The following testimonial by one of Donne’s contemporaries portrays the fervent temperament of young Donne is as follows:

[He was] a great visitor of ladies, a great frequenter of plays, a great writer of conceited verses. He had been a soldier, taking part in two military expeditions – one to Cadiz, [the other] to Azores – during which two incidents – a storm and a calm – became the subject of his two poems. He took part in more than one diplomatic mission, probably did a bit of spying, and was twice an MP; all this before James I [...] ordered him into the Anglican church (Scott, 1997, p. xiii).

At the age of 51 and approximately eight years after his ordination into the Anglican priesthood, Donne fell terminally ill. As Patricia Garland Pinka states, Donne’s sickness was diagnosed with “either typhus or relapsing fever and during his sickness, he reflected on the parallels between his physical and spiritual illness” (Pinka, 2025). His reflections culminated in the *Devotions* produced in 1624. The work consists of 23 sections recounting the stages of his disease and recovery; each stage comprises a meditation, a complaint, and a prayer to God. For Joan Faust, (2017) these stages construct a kind of a scaffold for a physical and spiritual autobiography (p. 157). Regarding the links of *The Devotions* to the earlier works, while some claimed that the work echoes the “Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius Loyola; some discover parallels with earlier attempts at spiritual autobiography. What makes the sermon an “astonishingly innovative” one is that it is the forerunner of autobiography based on both secular and religious grounds. As a final remark Scott (1997) states that *The Devotions* appears to be “a piece of both personal and religious self-searching that still ranks as unique” (p. xviii). In the work, Donne discusses religious problems of the soul and then literally talks to God.

In the article titled “Meditation and the Structure of Donne’s ‘Holy Sonnets,’” Martz claims that, “the structure of the *Devotions*, which is based on Ignatian meditations, owes much to “the profound impact of early Jesuit training upon the later career of John Donne” (Martz, as cited in Archer, 1961, p. 139). St. Ignatius, who lived in Spain in the 16th century, was the founder of the Jesuit order of priests. Ignatian meditation is a meditation method that uses visualisation and the imagination and is based on the style of prayer that St. Ignatius used in his spiritual exercises (*Brisbane Catholic Education*, 2020). Hence, it would not be wrong to relate Donne’s Catholic upbringing with his adoption of the Ignatian meditation method in his verse as well as in his prose works. Still from another point of view, Joan Faust’s (2017) approach to the genre of *The*

Devotions appears to be different from that of Louis L. Martz, (1961) though Faust asks the same questions regarding the genre of the work: “*The Devotions* itself is an in-between genre. Critics have long attempted to classify it – is it a spiritual autobiography? An example of the *ars moriendi*? A formal meditation? And if so, in the Ignatian or Protestant vein?” (p. 163). Quoting Kate Frost, Faust comes to the conclusion that the work is produced entirely in the Protestant vein:

...the book [*The Devotions*] seems to fit comfortably or uncomfortably, no easily recognised category of contemporary devotional literature ... Donne’s title page indicates the focus is “*upon our Humane Condition*” but he will relate “severall steps in my Sicknes” and signs his name, identifying himself as “Deane of S. Pauls” (Faust, 2017, p. 163).

In terms of style, the *Devotions* is eloquent and richly metaphorical. Concerning Donne’s authorial skills in prose, Evelyn M. Simpson (1962) notes that Donne, who was essentially a poet, invested his poetic genius in prose after his appointment as the Dean of St. Paul’s, “where he labored in his vocation of preaching, and, in this way he produced his finest prose” (p. 137). Thus, Donne’s originality and musicality began to sparkle in prose because as Simpson observes,

[h]e had the poet’s feelings for color and sound of words, and the instinct for the right word in the right place. He was able to please, or surprise, or shock in prose as he had done in verse. Donne’s prose conveys us the unmistakable flavor of the man’s personality ... (Simpson, 1962, p. 137).

According to Una Nelly (1969), Donne’s preferred themes in his prose are related to “the stark realities of life and death; the insufficiency, the transitoriness, the imperfection of man’s nature and of all temporal things; the certainty of death and the mockery its gruesome details offer to our pretensions” (p. 104). Donne’s sermons have a distinctive, dialectical and convincing power:

The dialectic of Donne’s prose works, and in particular of the sermons, has still the unmistakable Donnean characteristics of syllogistic reasoning, strengthened by analogy, and accompanied by detailed and original analysis. [...] On his lips it comes to life, impregnated by his dynamism, fired with the intensity of his emotion, made comprehensible and compelling by the personal experience from the heart of which Donne always writes and speaks (p. 99).

As C. V. Wedgwood (1969) suggests, the style of the 17th century Anglican sermons delivered in the Puritan period aligns with the nature of Donne’s meditations:

The Anglican sermon had changed in character during the stormy years of Puritan persecution. Mannered and elaborately intellectual preaching was replaced by a clear, forthright, dignified yet colloquial style. The aim was to persuade and to enlighten, not to alarm, impress, and mystify (p. 128).

John Donne's "Meditation 17" is among his most enduring and memorable prose works, displaying the author's unique skills in the production of his metaphysical conceits. "Meditation 17" starts with the following Latin statement which would later inspire the 20th-century American author Ernest Hemingway in that he titled his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940).

Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, morieris.

Now this bell tolling softly for another, says to me,

Thou must die (Donne, 1993, p. 1123).

Both Donne's "Meditation 17" and Hemingway's novel deal with the agonised human soul suffering in an environment where death looms over everything. Donne penned "Meditation 17" when a plague epidemic was devastating Jacobean London. Likewise, approximately three hundred years later, Hemingway recounts the story of the anguished state of human beings who are trying to survive in the death-ridden Spain during the Second Spanish Civil War. In Christopher Hancock's words: "Written in 1623, ... [Donne's] meditation is an evocative *memento mori* (recollection of death) prompted by Donne's illness at the time. The tolling bell would have been all-too familiar in plague ridden Jacobean London" (Hancock, 2020). Hancock argues that Donne's work warned Londoners about the significance of being selfless and sensitive towards "the cry of corporate, co-suffering humanity (Hancock, 2020). At this point Hancock draws attention to the two authors' different approaches to the theme of death:

Donne writes as a Christian, Hemingway more as a Buddhist humanist. Donne uses (another's) death to prompt reflection on (my) death: Hemingway celebrates heroic deaths to inspire heroic lives. To Hemingway, 'any man's death' does not necessarily 'diminish me': rather, it can challenge and inspire me. To Donne, life's interconnectedness is a God-inspired gift: to Hemingway, our duty to corporate humanity is born of politics, ideology and romantic love (Hancock, 2020).

The central themes of "Meditation 17" are death and the interconnectivity and the wholeness of human beings. The author elaborates on these themes by employing numerous comparisons, and, upon expanding his comparisons into long sentences and paragraphs, he builds his metaphysical conceits. For instance, the church is the first conceit found at the beginning of the work. Donne hears the tolling of a passing bell and reflects that it is intended for him as well: "Now, this bell tolling softly for another says to me, Thou must die" (Donne, 1997, p. 74). The passing bell announcing somebody else's death reminds Donne of the fact that he himself shall also die. The church bell is a reminder about the mortality of human beings and the inevitability of death. Katherine Hunt (2021) sees the bells as

the most prominent object in the Devotions, ringing through the whole text and occupying a privileged space as the focus of three central stations¹, which describe the peak and the break of Donne's fever, and the death of his neighbor (p. 217).

The subsequent lines expand the function of the church conceit by indicating the church's all-encompassing power to unite human beings in birth and death, granting a common roof for all believers, including Donne himself. That is why the author says he is concerned with every birth and every death because they are all parts of the same whole called "humanity."

Donne's next conceit likens God to an author and His creation – humankind – to a book, a volume written by this author. Then he gives a list of possible occurrences leading to death. His list includes old age, sickness, war, and justice. Death is also likened to translation. To Donne, when people die, they do not simply disappear but are carried into a better place. Each human being represents one chapter in the volume which is written by God, and when a person dies, the relevant chapter is not torn out of the book but translated into a better language; and, every chapter must be so translated (Donne, 1997, p. 75). These lines not only suggest the inevitability of death but also declare that God's hand is in every death the way it is in every birth. This extended metaphor including comparisons as author/God, author/book chapters, book pages/human life, translator/God and translation/death, ends up in a final "library" image, which is a reference to the Judgement day: "[God's] hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another" (Donne, 1997, p. 75). Donne's metaphor of life as a book written by God might be interpreted from the perspective of Schleiermacher's (2010) theory of hermeneutics. The grammatical structure suggests a deterministic worldview, wherein individuals are chapters within a divine narrative. Psychologically, Donne's message is one of reassurance – death is not an ending but a translation into a better existence. This reflects Schleiermacher's emphasis on understanding an author's personal and historical circumstances, as Donne's confrontation with illness likely influenced his view of mortality.

Then comes the famous "No man is an island" statement describing the reason why the author feels deep sadness on hearing the passing bell regardless of the identity of the deceased person. Donne writes,

No man is an island entire of himself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is less, as well as if a promontory were, [...] Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: It tolls for thee (Donne, 1997, p. 75).

1. "*The Devotions* is prefaced by twenty-two lines of Latin words, called "Stationes," summarising the twenty-three stages of the disease" (Scott, 1997, p. xviii).

Here, Donne draws a parallel between a grand piece of land like a continent and an isolated island surrounded by the sea, stretching like a lump of earth distant from the mainland. In the case of Donne's extended metaphor, Europe presents the unity and wholeness of humanity: humanity is the tenor, Europe is the vehicle depicting the interconnectedness and the unity of humankind. The island image, on the other hand, implies that the human being is not an isolated entity but a social being who is incapable of existing unless s/he is the part of a larger whole. In Donne's view, humanity as a whole is the mainland, and the sea whose waves are wearing away its shores gradually and perpetually presents death diminishing the size of the mainland – i.e., humanity – incessantly. Since Donne concerns himself with humankind, he feels lessened when he hears the passing bell because it reminds him of human mortality and the inevitability of death. Robert W. Reeder (2016) regards "Meditation 17" as "the philosophical climax of *The Devotions*, containing the immortal lines about mortality and mutuality" (p. 97). With reference to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory, Donne's extended metaphors in "Meditation 17" might be examined by applying dual-textual interpretation. For instance, the famous statement, "No man is an island," exemplifies a grammatical structure that conveys both literal and figurative meaning. On a psychological level, Donne's aim is to fortify the idea that human beings are interconnected, depending on one another in times of joy and suffering. By employing hermeneutic analysis, we can see that Donne's multi-layered metaphors embody the aesthetics of his poetics as well as a deliberate theological invitation for communal unity and the existence of divine presence in human experiences.

The last part of "Meditation 17" recounts how Donne achieved spiritual elevation while he was suffering from the serious illness. Donne's extended metaphor draws a paradoxical analogy between agony and material wealth. By "material wealth," Donne refers in particular to gold:

If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current monies, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it except we get nearer and nearer our home, Heaven, by it. Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels as gold in a mine and be of no use to him. But this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out, and applies that gold to me if, by this consideration of another's danger, I take mine own in contemplation, and so secure myself by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security (Donne, 1997, pp. 75-76).

For Robert Jungman (2007), the gold image functions as a vehicle in the layers of this metaphysical conceit:

The death or translation signaled by the tolling of the bell here becomes gold buried in a mine, of no value to anyone unless dug out and applied to someone else who knows how to make proper use of it (p.18).

In a similar vein, it might be claimed that for Donne, affliction resembles a treasure; like gold in the deep recesses of a mine, affliction hidden inside the body contributes to the improvement of man's soul. Affliction is precious because it matures the sufferer. Man learns much through suffering. The author says, "No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction" (Donne, 1997, p. 75). Affliction makes the sufferer more pious, virtuous, dignified, and undoubtedly, less ambitious. However, material possessions do not have such power. Thus, the one who is afflicted understands the transience of material gains, and takes shelter in God's grace with a strengthened faith. Here, the tenor is spiritual healing and the operating vehicle is affliction which underlines the significance of having an unshakeable faith to attain spiritual well-being. In the context of hermeneutic interpretation Donne's depiction of affliction as buried treasure suggests that sickness, like gold hidden beneath the earth, holds spiritual value that must be unearthed through faith. In parallel with the hermeneutic notion, understanding a text requires knowledge of both its linguistic structure and the philosophical motivations behind it.

John Donne's concluding remarks in "Meditation 17" emphasise the importance of learning from others' experiences because those experiences, the author claims, bring the believer closer to God. It might be inferred that the serious disease Donne had experienced made him strengthen his belief in spirituality once again. Clearly, Donne finds physical recovery invariably insufficient and incomplete unless it is complemented by faith-based spirituality.

Conclusion

"Meditation 17" emerges as a unique and compelling text in which Donne's extended metaphors function not merely as rhetorical embellishments but also as interpretive portals into the theological and existential concerns that define human experience. Reflecting upon Donne's metaphors in the light of Schleiermacher's (2010) dual hermeneutic process of grammatical and psychological interpretation, his metaphors reveal a continuous movement from the individual to the social, from the temporal to the eternal. The eloquent use of a brilliant, surprising and refined metaphorical language in "Meditation 17" enables Donne to bring together the personal and the communal in a dynamic interrelation; hence, while the author establishes an emphatic bond with his 17th-century English audience, nurturing their existential awareness through both his verse and prose works, it will undoubtedly be also correct to say that

the aesthetics of Donne's metaphorical language still continues to appeal to modern-day readers.

Whether likening humanity to chapters in God's book, continents, or unmined gold awaiting spiritual purification, Donne insists on the interdependence of all human beings and the universal significance of suffering. Since what is more needed in the 21st century is peace on a global scale, Donne's use of the metaphor, "no man is an island," might be interpreted as a warning against discriminations based on race and ethnicity, prompting his idea of the unity of humankind regardless of social, cultural and religious boundaries.

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In memoriam

“My dearest Kuğu, we may no longer be side by side physically, and this may be the last article we wrote together, but you will always remain with me and my studies with the support, inspiration and wisdom you gave me all through your life. As Donne emphasized, your book of life has not come to an end, it has just been translated into another language; you have been taken to a better place. May you be surrounded by light and peace there.” – Rana (2025)

FROM MARKERS TO MOVES: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONAL METADISOURSE ACROSS CULTURES AND DISCIPLINES

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Abstract: *The number of ‘marker’ approaches in metadiscourse (MD) studies greatly outnumbers the number of ‘move’ approaches. This has highlighted the focus on small units of analysis, especially word-based categorizations, such as classifying the pronoun “I” as self-mention. Following a contrasting ‘move’ approach, this overview offers a more contextualized and functional analysis of interactional discourse strategies in academic writing. A taxonomy of metadiscursive functions is developed through a critical synthesis of existing MD taxonomies and theoretical frameworks, shifting the focus from surface markers to rhetorical moves. The framework was developed in light of 90 research articles (RAs) written in English by Anglophone and Arab Academic English writers in political science, law, and journalism. This paper also examines an under-researched aspect of MD, namely interactional MD, which is categorized into stance and engagement. In addition to revealing disciplinary and cultural patterns in authorial stance-taking and audience engagement, the proposed move-based approach offers pedagogical value for EAP/ESP instruction. In this overview, a paradigm shift in understanding interactions in academic writing is proposed, especially in cross-cultural and disciplinary contexts.*

Keywords: *cross-cultural academic writing, engagement, metadiscourse, move analysis, stance*

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Framing Academic Discourse: The Rhetorical Impact of Interactional Metadiscourse

Human language possesses the remarkable ability to refer to various aspects of communication itself. This includes using language to comment on language, discourse organization, and communicative roles. This reflexive capacity has long been recognized through Jakobson's (1990) metalinguistic function, and it forms the foundational premise of metadiscourse (MD), commonly described as "text about the text" (Hyland, 2005). MD is now widely understood as the set of linguistic choices that help writers guide readers, signal interpersonal intentions, and construct a shared communicative space. MD does not refer only to how writers link their ideas to form a cohesive and coherent text (interactive MD), but also to how they project themselves into their texts and how readers respond to this projection of a shared discourse community (interactional MD) (Hyland, 2005).

MD plays a key role in academic writing as it not only reveals the writer's identity and personality but also shapes how they intend the readers to interpret the propositional content. Mauranen (1993) argues that MD is used in academic rhetoric to establish coherence and logic. Research has consistently shown that academic writing is inherently persuasive and audience-oriented, crafted to secure readers' acceptance of the knowledge being constructed (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004). Writers' choices are shaped by disciplinary conventions and cultural preferences, as communities differ in how they position arguments, express epistemic stance, and engage readers (Bloor & Bloor, 1991; Fløttum, 2012). These differences highlight the need to examine not only what writers say but how they guide and negotiate meaning through MD.

While increasing attention has been paid to the interpersonal aspects of academic writing, existing MD research has primarily focused on isolated linguistic items, such as hedges, boosters, and self-mentions, to examine how writers express stance and engage audiences (Hyland & Paltridge, 2011). These studies have significantly advanced our understanding of academic voice, yet they often adopt a word-based "marker" approach that overlooks the larger rhetorical purposes these choices serve. For instance, Hinkel (2003) notes cultural preferences that influence the use of hedging or amplification, but analyses typically remain at the lexical level without exploring how such choices function within broader argumentative structures. Despite its importance, research examining the functions of interactional MD markers in Arab and Anglophone academic articles remains surprisingly limited.

Hyland (2005) argues that MD reflects a community's practices, values, and ideals. Accordingly, this study adopts a tailored coding scheme to capture the functional and paradigmatic variations of interactional MD across two cultural contexts and three disciplines. The 'move' approach employed here identifies the pragmatic and rhetorical functions of stance and engagement markers,

offering insights into why discourse is structured in particular ways by specific groups of writers. While move analysis can be implemented in various applied linguistics approaches, in MD research it focuses on how linguistic choices fulfil communicative purposes – whether a stretch of text asserts a claim, guides readers toward a conclusion, elaborates a point, or poses a question. This perspective emphasizes contextual meaning and discursive purpose, rather than the dictionary definition of individual forms or their surface functions.

This paper seeks to make two pivotal contributions: (1) it advocates for renewed attention to rhetorical functions within interactional MD studies, and (2) it demonstrates a sample ‘move’ analysis of English research articles (RAs), comparing two cultural contexts across three academic disciplines. This study adopts and modifies aspects of Hyland’s (2005) interactional MD and proposes a more functional move-based framework for analyzing interaction in RAs written by Anglophone Academic Writers (AAWs) and Arab Academic English Writers (AAEWs). The corpus consists of 90 RAs (45 AAWs and 45 AAEWs) in journalism, law, and political science, selected using a purposive and quota-based strategy to ensure balance. For clarity, all corpus examples used throughout the paper are labeled using a discipline–writer code (e.g., J.–AAW13 = Journalism article by Anglophone Academic Writer no. 13; P.S.–AAEW7 = Political Science article by Arab Academic English Writer no. 7; L.–AAW8 = Law article by Anglophone Writer no. 8).

Each example was selected from the corpus of the study and coded accordingly. Once the corpus was finalized, all discussion sections were imported into NVivo and MD markers were coded clause-by-clause. I used a move-based framework to examine each identified marker in its immediate co-text to determine its rhetorical purpose, followed by categorizing it into its corresponding MD move. As part of the functional re-classification, I looked beyond surface lexical forms, such as whether a hedge expressed humility, negotiated knowledge, or conveyed indefinite claims, or whether a directive served as a textual, cognitive, or physical guide. In this process, small linguistic units traditionally treated as ‘markers’ were systematically mapped onto larger rhetorical ‘moves.’ To ensure reliability, two independent coders coded two samples from each discipline using clause-by-clause annotations in QSR NVivo, identifying MD markers and their moves with an inter-coder agreement of 88.6%, and resolving discrepancies through discussion and consensual coding (Kuckartz, 2014).

In this study, the binary of “native/non-native” is intentionally avoided, recognizing that language proficiency transcends a person’s first language. Academic English Writers associated with Arab universities and institutions are designated as AAEW, whereas academic writers based in Anglophone countries are labeled as AAW (Alghamdi & Alyousef, 2022). Additionally, the choice of these three soft disciplines was driven by a critical need to investigate cross-disciplinary rhetorical variations and their significance for ESP/EAP instruction, making them

highly relevant areas for deeper exploration. Surprisingly, MD studies in the soft sciences remain largely underexplored, even though the argumentation, critiques, and perspectives in these fields are frequently influenced by the writer's personal experiences, passions, and interests.

Mapping the Metadiscourse Landscape: Shifting from Markers to Moves

MD research rarely addresses an obvious question: What is the unit of meaning or analysis? Is it primarily word-based, or does it extend to a broader range of linguistic units? Research on discourse phenomena often demonstrates that size can vary, as is the case with pragmatic markers (e.g. Furko, 2017) and rhetorical moves (e.g. Moreno & Swales, 2018). According to Hyland (2017), MD can be realized in various ways and various lengths, ranging from single words to whole clauses or sentences. While MD markers can encompass a wide range of sizes and scopes, it is evident that many studies often focus on smaller units in their analyses. MD research can be classified into two ends: one end primarily deals with small units (a 'marker' approach), and the other end deals with large units (a 'move' approach). Both 'move' and 'marker' are enclosed in scare quotes, signifying that the terms are approximated. Note that researchers aligned with the 'move' tradition do not typically identify their work as embracing a 'move' approach and the same holds for those engaged in the 'marker' approach.

In the context/ functional approach, 'moves' are "discourse fragments or rhetorical units that perform coherent functions within texts" (Swales, 2004, pp. 228–229). However, this choice is not ideal, as MD functions in the taxonomy below resemble 'steps,' which can be smaller units than 'moves.' While we might refer to the approach as 'macro-level' or 'holistic,' these terms may carry overly optimistic implications. The literature frequently employs terms such as "discourse practices" (Koester & Handford, 2012, p. 11) and "discourse functions" (Ädel, 2006). Although I do not assert that the discourse functions in the MD taxonomy are directly comparable to 'moves,' I use the term 'move' here to provide a general framework for comparison with 'markers.' This comparison clearly demonstrates their differences. Using a 'marker' approach (Figure 1), it may be possible to identify a single pronoun *I* as an interactional MD (classified as Self-mention). In contrast, a study embracing a 'move' approach would identify *I* in *'I discuss below...'* as the architect (Figure 2) who gives structure and organization to the text and discourse, pointing to something to come.

It is possible to combine both approaches so that a 'move' analysis includes a 'marker' analysis. If a 'move' analysis is embraced and employed, investigating markers and their functions could yield valuable insight. For example, the analyst might examine the frequency with which a certain expression 'marker' can contribute to fulfilling a specific function (move). When comparing different populations or discourse types, keeping track of smaller units of MD can help assess

the overall density of MD markers (e.g. Alghamdi & Alyousef, 2022). Alghamdi and Alyousef (2022) analyzed the density of interactional MD markers, specifically hedges and boosters, comparing their frequency and rhetorical functions in RAs written by AAWs and AAEWs. In order to facilitate analysis and comparison, the authors identified smaller units as complementary to metadiscursive ‘moves’. This approach was not intended to suggest that the metadiscursive unit ‘marker’ itself was minor; rather, it offered a more refined understanding of the function of each unit ‘move’ within the discourse. Methodological versus theoretical considerations may differ between how a study counts relevant linguistic markers and how it views the linguistic units of analysis ‘moves’. MD quantification may serve as a tool or a foundational framework that does not affect definitions.

The ‘marker’ approach is essentially a word-based view of MD which is intimately related to the notion that MD is non-propositional. MD has historically been shaped by the tradition of pragmatic markers and the necessity to demonstrate that texts contain more than propositional material. Early research defined MD as non-propositional material (Ädel, 2021). An MD marker is sometimes used to define the entire category as well as its subcategories, such as Hedges, Boosters, Self-mentions, Attitude, and Engagement markers. These can, in some respects, be considered pragmatic markers. Fraser (1996) defined pragmatic markers by their non-propositional meaning, limiting their size by technically using the term ‘non-propositional’. MD often conceptualizes ‘proposition’ more expansively, encompassing all elements outside of metadiscourse itself (cf. Hyland, 2017). It can also be understood as the topic of discussion, including aspects that may be doubted, affirmed, qualified, denied, or regretted (Hyland, 2017). In practice, it can be contended that the restricted unit model is frequently upheld within the ‘marker’ approach, even with its flexible definitions. Nonetheless, MD need not be exclusively characterized as non-propositional, and not all researchers in the field adopt this view. Thomson (2021) offered an in-depth examination of the different arguments and viewpoints related to this issue.

There are numerous unresolved issues linked to the ‘marker’ and ‘move’ methods that are not addressed here. For example, the ‘marker’ tradition uses a predefined list of categories to retrieve MD examples, whereas the ‘move’ tradition examines context (see Ädel & Mauranen, 2010). Because the ‘marker’ approach considers individual words as MD, it overlooks the linguistic or syntactic patterns in which these words occur. Furthermore, the focus on lexis prevents MD from operating at the level of rhetoric or discourse.

Hyland’s Model of Interactional Metadiscourse: A Foundational Framework

Researchers have proposed several analytical frameworks for categorizing metadiscursive resources. While perspectives vary in scope, Hyland’s (2005)

interpersonal model provides the primary foundation for this study due to its influence and pedagogical relevance. This study centers on Hyland's interactional metadiscourse (MD) model (2005) because it offers a clear and widely adopted taxonomy for analyzing interactional meaning. As this model seeks to extend beyond the ideational aspect of texts, it sheds light on how writers successfully use MD to convey propositional content, while retaining their identity through credible representations of themselves and their beliefs. Hyland (2009) considered this as a key attribute of successful writing. His model pivots on writing as both interactive and interactional, and it brings writing scholars closer to a comprehensive pedagogy of voice. Writing research involves transforming the information found in research into a meaningful message. In this way, it is considered a social process in which producing a RA reflects methodologies, arguments, and rhetorical functions constructed to persuade and engage readers.

According to Hyland (2005), interactional MD consists of stance and engagement, two complementary ways through which writers position themselves and their readers in the discourse.

Stance reflects the writer's unique voice or the recognized personality specific to their community. This is a writer-oriented function that encodes how writers project and express their opinions, judgments, and commitments. Engagement, in contrast, can be seen as the reverse side of the interactions model. It is a reader-oriented feature that provides ways for writers to acknowledge their audience, guide interpretation, involve them as participants, and dynamically engage them in the argument. Figure 1 shows a list of interactional metadiscourse markers developed by Hyland (2005, p.177).

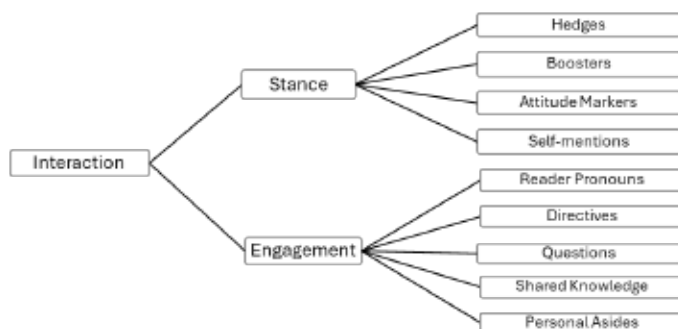


Figure 1. *Interactional Metadiscourse Markers*
(Based on Hyland, 2005, p. 177)

Stance includes four writer-oriented markers: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Authors can use these markers to demonstrate their commitment to propositional content. Hedges allow writers to withhold full commitment and frame claims as opinions rather than facts, whereas boosters help them assert ideas with confidence. Attitude markers reveal the writer's

affective response to propositions. Linguistic devices such as adjectives, attitude verbs, and adverbs express emotions such as surprise, frustration, agreement, or importance (Hyland, 2005). Self-mention markers, typically realized through first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives, explicitly present the authorial persona (Hyland, 2001). Table 1 presents some examples of stance markers in academic writing based on Hyland's model.

Table 1. Stance Markers in Academic Writing (Hyland, 2005)

Stance Markers	Examples
Hedges	<i>feasible, could, possibly, ...</i>
Boosters	<i>evidently, illustrate, assertively,...</i>
Attitude markers	<i>concur, ideally, impressive,...</i>
Self-mentions	<i>I, my, our, mine, author, ...</i>

Academic writers employ engagement markers to acknowledge their readers' presence, direct their interpretations, include them as participants, or align them with an intended interpretation. Among the engagement elements identified by Hyland (2005) are five primary linguistic resources: directives, reader mentions, questions, knowledge appeals, and personal asides. Directives guide the reader to take action within the discourse or to perceive the world from the author's perspective. A reader reference is a way for a writer to acknowledge the presence of a reader. Questions are markers that encourage reader engagement, facilitate dialogic participation, and guide them toward the writer's perspective. Knowledge appeals involve the intentional use of linguistic cues that signal shared or accepted information, allowing readers to recognize familiar concepts. Personal asides, on the other hand, let writers momentarily pause the argument to directly address the reader with a comment on the discussed idea. Table 2 presents examples of engagement markers in academic writing, drawing on Hyland's (2005) model.

Table 2. Engagement Markers in Academic Writing (Hyland, 2005)

Engagement Markers	Examples
Reader Pronouns	<i>You, your, inclusive we, ...</i>
Directives	<i>Note, observe, envision,...</i>
Questions	<i>What similarities might these two share?</i>
Knowledge Appeals	<i>Clearly, Of course, etc.</i>
Personal Asides	<i>And – as I trust many educators in TESOL will agree – critical thinking has started to gain prominence.</i>

Hyland's interactional MD markers highlight the writer's perspective toward both propositions and readers. In this sense, it creates a writer-reader relationship and anticipates the subjective negotiability of statements (Hyland, 1998b). Interactional MD is an evaluative form of discourse that expresses and realizes the writers' individuality as well as their disciplinary confined persona (Hyland, 1999). However, applying the model through a marker-based approach introduces limitations: many expressions are multifunctional, and their rhetorical functions cannot be determined solely from their lexical form. Over 300 possible instances of MD markers were identified by Hyland (2004) in different disciplinary discourses. In large corpora, the large number of cases makes functional analyses impractical. Recent applied linguistics research also demonstrates the limitations of surface-marker classifications, showing that metadiscourse features operate differently across rhetorical contexts and cannot be fully understood without functional analysis (Hasan & Alsout, 2023).

Interactional Metadiscourse: A Move-Based Approach

It is necessary to distinguish between propositions and MD before exploring interactional MD in academic writing. MD is functional, rhetorical, and pragmatic (Hyland, 2005). Thus, a 'move' approach enables a functional analysis of interactional markers – namely, stance and engagement – across disciplines and cultures, as augmented in this study. Analyzing the corpus revealed the frequency of these interactional MD markers. It is important to acknowledge, however, that identifying all the interactional MD markers used by a writer can be complex and somewhat challenging. Hyland (1996) argued that MD can be multifunctional, and not every lexical device or form can be interpreted in a single, clear-cut manner. As a result, it was not feasible to attribute specific meanings solely to particular forms. When expressing epistemic meaning, *should*, for example, can function as a hedge, as in "The resulting estimates *should* show that ideological distance is a..." It can also be used with a deontic meaning as an attitude marker, as in "Future research *should* look at other terror attacks and ..." A writer may also utilize it as a directive by directly engaging with the audience, as in "It *should* be noted that the results cited in the literature were derived from..." Thus, it was necessary to carefully examine the contexts of potential instances to determine their specific functions, hence a 'move' approach. Empirical work on rhetorical moves in academic abstracts similarly highlights the importance of mapping metadiscourse to functional units rather than isolated lexical items (Hasan & Hadoud, 2022; Hasan & Alsout, 2023).

Hyland (2005) viewed interactional MD as a complex process that includes stance and engagement markers. Stance is conveyed through writer-oriented MD markers, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-references. Engagement is expressed by reader-oriented metadiscourse markers such as reader mentions, personal asides, questions, knowledge appeal, and directives.

These MD markers were thus incorporated into an extended ‘move’ approach to interactional MD, and further ‘move’ analyses of stance and engagement markers were conducted based on the corpus and according to some of the previously reviewed literature (e.g. Liu & Tseng, 2021; Dueñas, 2010; Hyland 2002a; Tang & John, 1999; Thetela, 1997). Figure 2 illustrates a ‘move’ approach to interactional MD in this study.

Interactional Metadiscourse	Stance	Hedges	Humility
			Plausible reasoning
			Negotiating knowledge
			Indefinite claims
		Boosters	Assertiveness
			Factual reasoning
			Sharing knowledge
			Salient claims
		Attitude	Significance
			Predictability
			Assessment
			Acceptability
	Self-mentions	Obligation	
		Emotion	
		The research recounter	
		The originator	
Engagement	Directives	The opinion holder	
		The architect	
		Textual guide	
	Reader Mention	Physical guide	
		Cognitive guide	
		Guiding the reader	
	Questions	Aligning the reader	
		Establishing an informed reader	
		Framing information	
		Stimulating reflection	
	Knowledge Appeals	Anticipating future research	
		Demonstration	
	Personal Asides	Solidarize with the reader	
		Further explanation	
Concept illustration			
Readers’ guide			
		Explicit views	

Figure 2. *A move approach to interactional metadiscourse*

Stance Moves in Academic Writing

Hedges

Hedges enable authors to acknowledge alternative perspectives while avoiding absolute commitment to their knowledge claims. Drawing on prior studies on hedging (Liu & Tseng, 2021; Hu & Cao, 2011; Hyland & Tse, 2005), four specific types of hedging moves have been identified: showing humility in knowledge claims, employing assumptive reasoning, negotiating knowledge, and making indefinite claims. The humility move reflects an author's modesty by softening the impact of their assertions and downplaying their contribution (Example 1). Assumptive reasoning, on the other hand, involves deriving conclusions from findings with low certainty markers (Example 2). Knowledge negotiation allows writers to align or contrast their findings with previous research, carefully avoiding misinterpretation (Example 3). Lastly, writers make indefinite claims by using ambiguous language, allowing for flexibility rather than certainty in their statements (Example 4).

1. Constructive journalism *would be* an opportunity for them to change their self-censored reporting by being able to highlight a problem through the offer of solutions, rather than avoiding it altogether. (J.- AAEW9)
2. One *possible* explanation for the surprisingly minimal impact of ideological disagreement on institutional support could be that the Court has issued liberal rulings in numerous high-profile cases. (L.- AAW1)
3. Current studies *suggest* that when voters possess additional information about candidates, gender plays a diminished role in their decision-making (Hayes 2011)). (P.S.- AAW7)
4. *Some* critics may contend that the forecasts do not meet the standards of statistical or demographic parity. (L.- AAW3)

These examples illustrate how hedges function as rhetorical moves in academic discourse to manage epistemic risk and signal caution (Hyland, 1998a;). Disciplinary norms for certainty and argumentation shape their function (Bloor & Bloor, 1991). The pragmatic function of hedging cannot be inferred from lexical form alone, which is why move-based analysis is necessary (Hinkel, 2003).

Boosters

It is possible to consider hedges and boosters as lying at opposite ends of the certainty spectrum. As opposed to hedges, boosters increase commitment to a proposition and, therefore, “close down alternatives” (Hyland, 2005, p. 52). Based on previous studies of boosters (Liu & Tseng, 2021; Hu & Cao, 2011;

Hyland & Tse, 2004) four distinct booster moves were identified: approaching knowledge claims with assertiveness, establishing factual reasoning, sharing knowledge, and conveying a sense of salience. The assertiveness move highlights how writers project a confident identity by amplifying the impact of their suggestions and contributions (Example 5). Factual reasoning move refers to the process by which writers use truth-value markers to indicate facts based on their research findings (Example 6). The sharing knowledge move refers to the assumption that certain knowledge is shared among audiences (Example 7). Finally, the salience move pertains to how writers explicitly assess the credibility of their claims (Example 8).

5. Many Egyptian governmental organizations still do not have recorded data, which is *a must* for data journalists to build databases for their data-driven stories. (J.-AAEW12)
6. The initial VAR results *show* minimal evidence that shifts in public support influence media coverage. (P.S.- AAW1)
7. The issue could be addressed by detaining a sufficiently large, random sample of low-risk white juveniles. *Clearly*, this would be a nonstarter for policy. (L.- AAW3)
8. *Undoubtedly*, the campaign, which was waged primarily on social media, provided the perfect platform and the best opportunity for radical and terrorist groups to attract, recruit, and mobilize new followers. (P.S.-AAEW3)

The booster examples illustrate how writers assert confidence and guide reader alignment – strategies commonly used to reinforce claims and strengthen persuasion (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 1990). While markers such as “clearly” or “undoubtedly” are traditionally identified lexically, their rhetorical impact varies across disciplines with different expectations for assertiveness (Fløttum, 2012). This supports the need for contextualized, move-based interpretation rather than surface-level categorization.

Attitude

In addition to commenting on the credibility, relevance, and truth of the propositional content, RAs writers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so forth. They employed attitude markers to control the interpretation of the propositional content, suggesting sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously how they wanted their statements to be understood. Based on previous studies of attitude markers (Thetela, 1997; Hyland & Tse, 2005) and the findings from the corpus, six distinct moves of attitude markers were identified: significance, predictability, assessment, acceptability, obligation, and emotion. The significance move highlights the author’s assessment of the value, intrigue, and relevance of the content presented (Example 9). In contrast,

the predictability move indicates whether the author considers the content to be anticipated or surprising (Example 10). The assessment move refers to the writers' evaluations of a research topic or research entities (Example 11). The acceptability move expresses the writer's evaluation of propositions and findings from previous studies or theories compared to their own (Example 12). The obligation move refers to the writer's evaluation of what is obligatory or necessary (Example 13). The emotive move conveys the writer's emotions and personal feelings toward the propositional content (Example 14).

9. This study offers *valuable* insights into how U.S. politicians seek to construct more pessimistic or optimistic portrayals of the nation. (J.- AAW11)

10. The result is most *surprising* since Lebanese policies mandate 10 weeks of paid maternity leave. (J.- AAEW14)

11. Given those differences in the characteristics of our two samples, it is *difficult* to draw strong conclusions by comparing the Egyptian with the Syrian sample. (P.S.-AAEW5)

12. Moreover, we *agree* with Levine (2005), Nili and Rastad (2007), and Bhattacharyya and Hodler (2014) in the view that a lack of financing is a leading constraint for the private sector, while financial development can play a significant role in diversifying the economy. (L.-AAEW11)

13. Future research *should* attempt to further parse out the issues of race, religion, geography, and cultural similarity in coverage of terrorism victims. (J.-AAEW1)

14. *Sadly*, this is reminiscent of Plotnikoff and Woolfson's findings on the matter of appeals for the Royal Commission, in the wake of several high-profile miscarriages of justice. (L.-AAW13)

These attitude markers reflect evaluative stances that express the writer's affective or judgmental orientation toward the proposition (Hyland, 2004; Martin & White, 2005). Culture shapes such evaluations and it is tolerated differently across disciplines (McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012). By analyzing moves, we can gain insight into how writers position themselves emotionally and evaluatively.

Self-mention

Based on previous studies looking at the discourse functions of self-mentions (i.e., writer's role) in academic texts (e.g., Alyousef & Alotaibi, 2019; Muñoz, 2013; Hyland, 2001, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999), a move analysis was conducted to examine the specific functions of self-mention markers in this study. It is important to note that self-mentions highlight the writers' roles and involvement in RAs with different moves, based on the types of MD markers they collocate with. Pronouns and nouns that refer to the writers are usually found to collocate

with other types of MD markers like hedging markers such as *suggest* and *believe*, boosting markers such as *argue* and *found*, or attitude markers such as *hope* and *agree*. Thus, the classifications of writers' moves in the corpus could be grouped into seven roles: (1) recounter of procedures; (2) originator; (3) opinion holder; and (4) architect. This aligns with recent findings that demonstrate how self-mention helps writers negotiate identity and authority in research articles (Alghamdi, 2025). The recounter of procedures uses self-mentions to list research processes (Example 15). The originator projects themselves as originators and contributors of new ideas to the field (Example 16). The opinion holder expresses opinions on either an approach or theory related to the authors' work or the research methods and processes used in their study (Example 17). The architect gives structure to the text and the discourse (Example 18).

15. First, *we examined* the degree to which partisans had optimistic or pessimistic appraisals about the United States' standing in the world. (J.-AAW11)

16. *We provide* the first comparative evidence to support the hypothesis, taking a wide variety of potentially confounding factors into account. (P.S.-AAW10)

17. In sum, *we think* moral disengagement is an effective approach that may yield a rich and interesting line of research. (P.S.-AAW2)

18. In this part of the article, *we discuss* the findings of the empirical case study presented above. (L.-AAW12)

Depending on the rhetorical intent, writers adopt different authorial roles – such as architect, originator, or recounter (Hyland, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999). Treating “I” or “we” as simple markers obscures these nuanced identity performances. In a move-based approach, writers construct authorial presence and negotiate authority within discourse communities (Ivanic, 1998).

Engagement Moves in Academic Writing

Directives

Academic writers used directives in their RAs to guide readers to perform an action or emphasize what should be particularly taken into account. Hyland (2001, 2002a) categorized directives as textual, physical, or cognitive, depending on their discourse functions within the texts. Textual acts guided readers through the discussion and directed them to textual information (Example 19). Physical acts guided readers through specific research processes and actions in either intertextual sources (Example 20) or the research world (Example 21). Cognitive acts guided readers through a line of reasoning and allowing them to draw similar conclusions. (Example 22).

19. The results of the analysis reveal a pattern similar to that of Figure 1a, with strong-tie appeals causing larger increases in motivation to like and share the protest post among Korean respondents than among Japanese respondents (see Tables A11 and A12 and Figure A2 in the online Appendix). (J.-AAW10)

20. First, we cannot assess whether state policies are consistent with mass preferences at any given moment (*cf.* Achen 1978; Matsusaka 2001; Lax & Phillips 2012). (P.S.-AAW14)

21. Assume that providers have a utility function where Y is income minus the value of leisure and I is the level of inducement. (L.-AAW9)

22. To interpret the estimated effect of media coverage on UKIP support, consider the impulse response function plotted in Figure 3. (P.S.-AAW1)

These directive expressions serve as instructional or orienting rhetorical moves (Hyland, 2005). Their function depends on both genre and disciplinary expectations regarding reader engagement (Swales, 2004). In this way, interactional MD should be understood in terms of rhetorical moves alongside lexical identification.

Reader mentions

Reader mentions enable the writers to steer readers toward a preferred interpretation and to establish solidarity with them to make significant contributions to their research. Analyzing the moves related to reader mentions in the corpus revealed three distinct functions: steering the reader through the discourse (Example 23), aligning the reader with a specific interpretation (Example 24), and positioning the reader as a knowledgeable contributor to the discussion (Example 25).

23. We can now turn our attention to the space newspapers devoted to policy discussion in their election coverage. (J.-AAW7)

24. Examining both the Syrian and Egyptian samples in Table 5, one can see that both Syrians and Egyptians are notably more likely to exhibit inequity aversion when their opponent is Syrian, as opposed to Egyptian. (P.S.-AAEW5)

25. We also need to look beyond the state's procedural framework which, despite appearing impartial. (L.-AAW14)

These examples position readers as active participants in the interpretation process (Hyland, 2001). Different cultural and disciplinary contexts have different engagement strategies (Fløttum, Dahl & Kinn, 2006). A move-based lens explains how writers manage interpersonal alignment with their readers.

Questions

The academic writers used questions as an engagement marker to raise readers' interests and curiosity which can lead to the writers' viewpoint (Hyland, 2002b). The move analysis of the corpus data revealed that the questions in the corpus served four major moves: Framing information (Example 26), stimulating reflection (Example 27), anticipating future research (Example 28), and demonstration (Example 29). The first three of these functions have also been reported in studies by Hyland (2002b) and Camiciottoli (2008), while the last function was identified and added based on the corpus of this study.

26. In other words, *what can a subset of Latino voters in NC tell us about Latinos elsewhere?* In the following section, we perform a replication test using GRD to assess the generalizability of our results in a different state. (P.S.-AW9)

27. What is not clear, however, is whether there is a negative corollary to this positive injunctive. In other words, *if Japanese citizens tend not to see protest as something citizens ought to do, do they then view protest as something that good citizens ought not do?* (J.-AAW10)

28. A finding that could be valuable to reevaluate during Trump's presidency. *Do politicians running in safe versus marginal districts respond to different types of constituents? Do politicians respond differently to constituents' issue priorities depending on the issues they own? And how would these results differ across institutional or political contexts?* (P.S.-AAW12)

29. We consider here several possible issues in the interpretation of our results: *Could our simplified scenarios pose a threat to external validity (for a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Appendix A.1 in the SI)? Might our experiments present the causal factor of interest (the treatment) in an implausibly salient manner, thus leading us to overestimate the effect?* (P.S.-AW11)

Questions serve the rhetorical move of anticipating reader concerns or prompting reflection (Hyland, 2005). While they are easily identifiable lexically, their pragmatic function varies by discipline and community norms (Swales, 1990). This illustrates the limitations of the marker approach and confirms the value of a move-based interpretation.

Knowledge appeals

To build a shared understanding with disciplinary readers, academic writers in this corpus used knowledge appeals. They were primarily used in the corpus to establish solidarity with readers based on common background knowledge (Example 30).

30. *Obviously*, the survey cannot attempt to account for the views of the entire Shi'i community, but it does examine one of the Shi'i community's most articulate and opinionated groups toward a timely and important topic. (P.S.-AAEW2)

Knowledge appeals work as engagement moves that construct shared understanding between writer and reader. Writers position readers as members of the same discourse community by presenting certain propositions as common knowledge (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 1990). The writer's argument is more likely to be accepted with this strategy. Rather than merely serving as lexical indicators of engagement, these expressions function rhetorically to build consensus.

Asides

Personal aside is an interactional strategy that interrupts the flow of the argument to build solidarity with readers (Hyland, 2005). The move analysis of asides in the corpus showed that they were not only used to express opinions or give further comments but also to initiate a brief interpersonal conversation. It became apparent that these types of engagement markers were typically used to indicate four major moves: to offer further explanation of a certain point (Examples 31), to illustrate a concept (Examples 32), to point readers to more specific information (Examples 33), and to provide with the writers' explicit remarks about the proposition (Example 34).

31. There was a type of bipolarity at play in all of *The Post's* coverage – *localized in coverage of Ankara and Maiduguri, and globalized in coverage of both Paris and Brussels*. (J.-AAEW1)

32. The results are also robust due to fewer periods observed post-MSP than pre-MSP (*e.g., examining only the first year after the case is filed and censoring any case that has not terminated within one year*). (L.-AAW5)

33. The VAR results indicate clear but, *for reasons discussed above*, inherently limited evidence for Hypothesis 1. (P.S.-AAW1)

34. Every reaction here is to either do work for free (*which, in this payment regime particularly, becomes more difficult as cuts bite*) or to cut corners. (L.-AAW13)

By using personal asides, writers foster rapport, clarify intent, or emphasize a point (Hyland, 2005). Such moves contribute to interpersonal involvement and writer–reader connection – a key aspect of interactional discourse (Ädel, 2006). Context-dependent rhetorical functions reinforce the need to analyze MD as moves rather than isolated lexical items.

Teaching with Moves: Implications for EAP/ESP

EAP/ESP instruction can benefit from the move-based approach developed in this study. It is particularly valuable in contexts such as Saudi Arabia, the Arab world, and the non-Anglophonic academic community that require students to produce academic texts without explicitly training them in rhetorical strategies. The move-based approach may be particularly useful for teaching MD because it emphasizes larger discourse units and provides functional labels that are transparent. Students can be guided to identify specific rhetorical functions in academic texts and to apply these moves in their own writing. Students can practice these functions in authentic texts by noticing and practicing the moves within each category, such as hedging, boosting, attitude expression, self-mention roles, and engagement strategies. For example, students may identify hedging moves in research articles, analyze how boosters strengthen disciplinary claims, or incorporate engagement moves when drafting literature reviews. As a result of the move-based approach, teachers can design scaffolding tasks that help learners construct stance and negotiate reader engagement more effectively, which can also support materials development.

Conclusion

This paper has advocated for a ‘move’ method in MD, considering functionally-defined units of meaning. Although it is more comprehensive than the ‘marker’ approach, this does not imply abandoning the ‘marker’ approach. Future MD research should take a ‘move’ approach, and shift from frequency-based, descriptive studies of academic genres to rhetorical aspects. The taxonomy was intended to work across a range of genres and communication modes, and to be adaptable to new information. Additionally, it can be used to study cultural preferences among academic writers. The present study contributes to the empirical study of academic writing by focusing on discourse and rhetoric. Although students are often required to produce academic texts, they rarely receive explicit rhetorical instruction or training. The study illustrates how a move-based perspective can offer deeper insights into how writers construct stance and engagement, and demonstrates its potential for application across different disciplines and cultural contexts.

This study is limited by its focus on a conceptual and illustrative application of the move-based taxonomy rather than a full empirical validation across genres or larger corpora. Future research could apply and test the taxonomy quantitatively and qualitatively across additional disciplines, languages, and multimodal genres to further refine its categories and confirm its analytical utility.

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