

ISSN 1916-4742 (Print)
ISSN 1916-4750 (Online)

English Language Teaching

CANADIAN CENTER OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION®

Vol. 16, No. 11 November 2023



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Enhancing Writing Proficiency: The Role of Model Essays as Corrective Feedback Tools in IELTS Writing Task Achievement and Coherence/Cohesion

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Received: September 16, 2023

Accepted: October 21, 2023

Online Published: October 27, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p1

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p1>

Abstract

Proficiency in IELTS writing tasks is crucial for obtaining high scores in this internationally recognized test. This quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of corrective feedback in improving the gain scores of both academic writing task 1 and task 2. Sixty Iranian students participated in pre/post-test administrations, with the experimental group receiving instruction based on the analysis made on 10 model essays, and the control group received reformulation on their own produced texts. Two skilled raters assessed the students' typewritten texts in terms of task response and "coherence/cohesion" – two writing band descriptors. After conducting ANOVA and Bonferroni post hoc tests, the results demonstrated that the treatment group achieved significantly higher scores in the two mentioned components. In both the post-test and delayed post-test, the Experimental Group (EG) consistently outperformed the Control Group (CG) in task response sub-scale of academic writing task 1 & 2 ($p < 0.05$). Further examination, employing a multi-mediator approach, accentuates the substantial impact of these writing rubrics on the overall IELTS score. Additionally, within the EG, there was a significant increase in coherence scores between the pretest and posttest ($p < 0.05$). However, no statistically significant change was observed between the post-test and the delayed post test ($p > 0.05$).

Keywords: writing proficiency, coherence/cohesion, IELTS, model essays, feedback

1. Introduction

Various approaches have been developed in the history of ESL writing, including the oral approach, current-traditional rhetoric, and process approach. However, criticisms arose, highlighting the approach's limitations in addressing individual differences, task variations, cognitive development, proficiency levels, and academic purposes. One approach that emerged to address these shortcomings was the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) approach. EAP aimed to socialize learners into academic contexts and enable them to succeed within academic communities. Regardless of the approach, the importance of corrective feedback in improving students' writing remains a common thread. For instance, while Ferris argues that "effective error correction, which is selective, prioritized, and clear," can benefit some students, Truscott disagrees. Feedback can take various forms, including direct and indirect, selective, and comprehensive. When assessing a skill, the evaluation criteria reflect the underlying theoretical framework. Holistic and analytic scoring are the primary methods for assessing essays, elucidating how raters react to writing tasks.

Corrective feedback in language learning and teaching is a topic of substantial interest, encompassing all four language skills. However, writing, as a productive skill, presents unique challenges for both teachers and students. The growing international migration to English-speaking countries for residence and education has increased the demand for high scores in international English exams. One such exam is the International English

Language Testing System (IELTS), taken by millions worldwide each year. IELTS is considered an international high-stakes test that provides reliable evidence of a test taker's English proficiency. It is administered, developed, and researched by organizations such as the British Council, University of Cambridge, and IDP - International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges.

Writing, being the most complex and demanding language learning skill, necessitates students to possess acceptable writing skills in an academic context (Hyland, 2011; Jahin & Idrees, 2012; Nueva, 2016). Several studies found that some characteristics of academic writing such as content, purpose, vocabularies, grammar mechanics, and well-organized format are problematic for students (Brown & Lee, 2015; Chen & Kent, 2020; Jafary, 2014; Jahin, 2012; Smith, 2015).

In the quest for effective corrective measures or tools, an empirical study was conducted in an intensive English program and the findings revealed that written feedback could positively affect the students' linguistic abilities (Evans & Morrison, 2011). Corrective feedback (CF) strategies have been classified in various ways, including explicit feedback, clarification requests, direct, indirect, metalinguistic feedback, recasts, repetition, elicitation, and reformulation. Such a sociocultural paradigm allows us to define written corrective feedback (WCF) as follows: it entails (a) reflecting what that individual learner needs most, as writing is a productive skill, and (b) a fundamental approach to teaching involves that writing tasks and feedback are relevant, timely, persistent, and practicable for both providers and students (Anderson, 2023; Burke & Pieterick, 2010; Easton et al., 2022; Ellis, 2009).

It is notable that the IELTS test has been the subject of extensive research. Several studies examined the wash back effect of IELTS, others focused on the internal rater reliability of IELTS writing, and Some investigated the authenticity of writing tasks in IELTS (Fenton-Smith & Humphreys, 2017; Johnson & Tweedie, 2021; Sulaiman, 2012). One particular study investigated the potential relationship between the analytical essay-scoring rubric in IELTS and thematic progression patterns criteria (Soleymanzadeh & Gholami, 2014). With 45 Iranian participants, Ahmadi, Riasati, and Bavali conducted a study to evaluate test takers' performance in IELTS academic writing, focusing on the table and bar chart format of Task 1 (Ahmadi et al., 2019). In a study more closely related to the feedback concerns of the present research, Alavi, Nemati, and Dorri Kafrani investigated the more problematic features of IELTS academic writing Task 2, emphasizing the need for corrective feedback and support (Alavi et al., 2020). Their results indicated that effective training, feedback, and practice were key to achieving better results. Familiarization with IELTS writing through sample analysis and timely feedback were also highlighted as important factors. In a similar vein, Pearson conducted a valuable study that aligns with the present research, which explored written corrective feedback specifically in Task 2 of the IELTS writing test based on teachers' reactions (Pearson, 2018). Results revealed that feedback types such as direct and prescriptive comments were found to be useful. Furthermore, teachers' theoretical knowledge about feedback, along with their experience and personal beliefs, played a role in selecting appropriate methods. The positive role of feedback was further affirmed in the related studies which investigated academic writing task 2 of the IELTS exam (Sanavi & Nemati, 2014).

Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Analytic Scoring

Advantages	Disadvantages
Encourages raters to address the same features	May divert attention from overall essay effect
Allows more diagnostic reporting	Rating one scale may influence others
Assists reliability as candidates gets several scores	Very time consuming compared with the holistic method
Detailed criteria allow easier rater training	Writing is more than simply the sum of its parts
Prevents conflation of categories into one	Favors essays where scalable info easily extracted
Allows teachers to prioritize specific aspects	Descriptors may overlap or be ambiguous

Table 2. Assessing Test Usefulness: A Comparative Analysis of Holistic and Analytic Scales Across Six Key Dimensions (Ferris, 1999; Weigle, 2002)

Quality	Holistic Scales	Analytic Scales
Reliability	Lower than analytic, but still acceptable	Higher than holistic
Construct Validity	Holistic scale assumes that all relevant aspects of writing ability develop at the same rate and can thus be captured in a single score; holistic scores correlate with superficial aspects such as length and handwriting	Analytic scales more appropriate for L2 writers as different aspects of writing ability develop at different rates
Practicality	Relatively fast and easy	Time-consuming; expensive
Impact	The single score may mask an uneven writing profile and may be misleading for placement	More scales provide useful diagnostic information for placement and/or instruction more useful for rater training
Authenticity	White (1998) argues that reading Holistically is a more natural process than reading analytically	Raters may read holistically and adjust analytic scores to match the holistic impression
Interactiveness	n / a	n / a

Table 3 figure out some detail of IELTS band descriptors adapted from the IELTS task writing band descriptors public version.

Table 3. IELTS Writing Task Scoring Descriptor.

Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion
How the prompt is addressed properly	Arrangement and organization of main ideas
The relevance of the position presented in the text	Paragraphing
Support and extension of main ideas	Referencing and substitution
Clarity and justification of conclusions drawn	Use of cohesive markers

Adapted from Pearson (2018) based on the public IELTS Writing Task 2 band descriptor. In preparation for IELTS, candidates often engage in practice tasks, including writing, with feedback from teachers, which is the focus of this study. This study aims to elucidate effective strategies for advanced writing by analyzing a standardized exam like IELTS and also try to re-evaluate the role of feedback in academic writing by exploring the effectiveness of using model essays as a corrective feedback tool. Teachers' feedback, which may include error explanation, the introduction of new ideas, and the provision of examples or models, plays a crucial role in helping students correct their writing.

2. Method

The Method section describes in detail how the study was conducted, including conceptual and operational definitions of the variables used in the study, Different types of studies will rely on different methodologies; however, a complete description of the methods applied enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of our selected methods and the reliability and the validity of the associated results, It also presents a unique opportunity for experienced investigators to replicate the study with a focus on other related aspects pertinent to Feedback provision..

2.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quasi-experimental design encompassing pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test phases, with the latter examination being administered in the subsequent month following the post-test. Furthermore, a mediation model has been employed to evaluate the impact of model essay instruction on the IELTS rubric via these avenues. The entire experimental procedure spans ten two-hour sessions and the dependent variable centers on the enhancement of the candidates' writing abilities, while the independent variables include IELTS writing sub-scales and model essays.

2.2 Participants

As delineated in Table 4, the overall participant cohort comprises 57 individuals, with thirty individuals allocated to the experimental group (EG) and twenty-seven individuals to the control group. The age spectrum of the participants ranges from 19 to 27, encompassing exclusively Iranian students across diverse academic disciplines, all of whom have attained an upper-intermediate level of English proficiency. The experimental group is composed of 16 females and 14 males, while the control group comprises 14 females and 13 males.

Table 4. The studied groups and the number of participants

Group	N Calculated	Attrition	Participants
Experimental	30	0	30
Control	30	3	27
Total	60	3	57

To investigate how this approach impacts two IELTS writing task scoring rubrics, task achievement/response and coherence / cohesion investigated. Our research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

2.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

(1) Is there a significant difference in gain scores on the IELTS mock writing test between the experimental group (receiving model essays) and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2?

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in learners' gain scores on the IELTS mock writing test between the experimental group and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2.

(2) Is there a significant difference in the 'task response/achievement' sub-scale of IELTS writing scoring rubric between the experimental group (receiving model essays) and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2?

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in learners' gain scores on the 'task response/achievement' sub-scale between the experimental group and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2.

(3) Is there a significant difference in the 'coherence and cohesion' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric between the experimental group (receiving model essays) and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2?

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in learners' gain scores on the 'coherence and cohesion' sub-scale between the experimental group and the control group for both Task 1 and Task 2.

The study draws on three main theories: the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky, the Interaction Hypothesis, and the cognitive theory and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis. Recent literature supports the idea that corrective feedback promotes learning by inducing learners to notice and correct errors, ultimately aiding in interlanguage development.

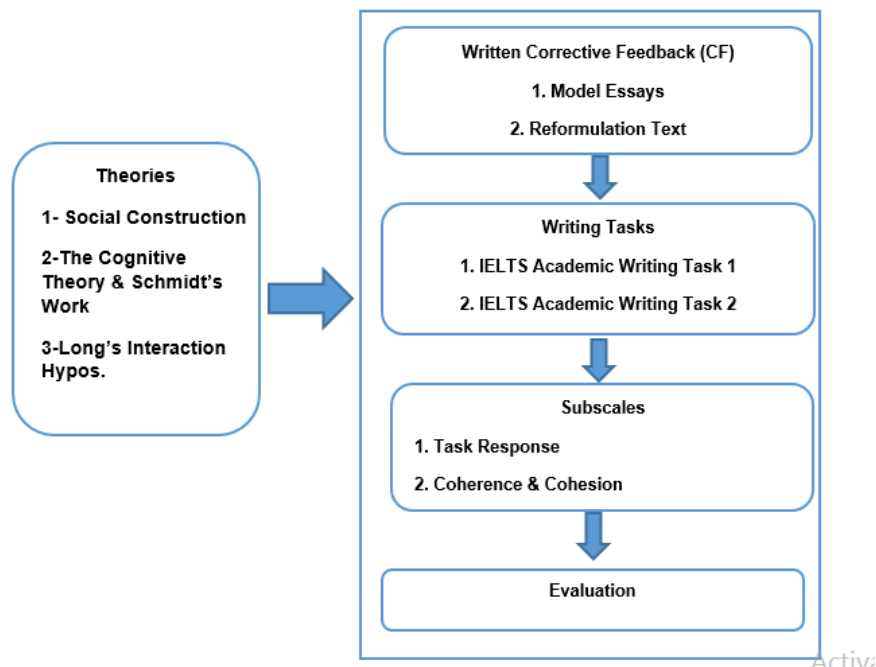


Figure 1. Theoretical relationship of the study

Figure 1 illustrates the research model, highlighting the intervention of model essay instruction, the use of reformulation as an analytical method, and the syntactic approach. To determine the primary impact of feedback on IELTS writing, several relevant articles have been reviewed to present the findings.

2.4 Instrument and Materials

Before commencing the study, a panel of experts meticulously scrutinized the validity of the questionnaire, lesson plan, teaching schedules, model essays, and writing tasks to ensure their robustness as research instruments. The selection of writing tasks was a deliberate process, carefully chosen from Taylor and Asmundson's repertoire, encompassing two distinct compositions: a descriptive essay and an argumentative piece (Taylor & Asmundson, 2008). A prescribed minimum word count requirement of 150 words for Task 1 and 250 words for Task 2 was enforced. Furthermore, the model essays utilized in this study were sourced from the same academic work. Two proficient native English raters validated the models as exemplars of native-level English writing. The study's array of materials included a TOEFL test (applied as the pretest), IELTS sample essays drawn from reputable sources such as "The IELTS Masterclass," "Cambridge IELTS Test 18," "IELTS on track," "Objective IELTS," and "IELTS Preparation Course" by Penny Cameron. Additionally, the IELTS Task 2 Writing band descriptors, accessible to the public, were incorporated into the study materials. The appointed raters were seasoned ESL lecturers, boasting a minimum of 12 years of experience in rating, with a track record of four years in evaluating IELTS essays at the British Council. The number of raters mirrored the approach employed by researchers, consisting of two raters alongside a reserved individual (Ahmadi et al., 2019; Sanavi & Nemati, 2014). The study's core IELTS criteria comprised Task Achievement/Task Response and "Coherence and Cohesion." Task Achievement/Task Response particularly examined the extent to which candidates' writing effectively conformed to the test's rigorous requirements, including adherence to prescribed word count limits. It critically evaluated whether candidates adeptly constructed persuasive arguments in direct response to the provided prompt, substantiated by a profound foundation of knowledge, personal experiences, concrete evidence, and compelling examples. On the flip side, the Coherence and Cohesion criterion delved into the text's lucidity and fluency. To be specific, coherence pertained to the consistent logical interconnection between each sentence and paragraph, whereas cohesion scrutinized the adept and judicious use of cohesive linguistic tools (e.g., conjunctions, pronouns, synonyms) to deftly establish referential relationships between sentences and paragraphs.

2.5 Procedure

As delineated previously, a TOEFL test and an IELTS writing test were administered as pretests for both the experimental and control groups. The strategic sequencing of the IELTS writing test following the TOEFL pretest was methodically chosen to nullify any potential 'fatigue' factor that could have skewed the results. To ensure uniformity and nullify the impact of handwriting variability on raters, all writing samples were systematically transcribed into typed format. Prior to initiating the rating process, an orientation session was conducted with both raters. During this session, the procedural intricacies, and the mechanics of using the scoring guide were thoroughly explained. It's worth noting that the study's underlying objectives remained intentionally undisclosed to the raters. Subsequently, during the second session, candidates underwent a comprehensive orientation to the various components of the writing tasks and the nuances of IELTS band scoring in both the experimental and control groups. However, it's essential to highlight that only the treatment group had the privilege of engaging in a thorough analysis of a model essay.

3. Results and Discussion

In terms of internal validity, a thorough examination of the demographic variables of participants in both groups was conducted. Statistical analyses were employed, including independent t-tests and chi-square tests, to ascertain the comparability of these variables.

As indicated by the statistical data presented in Tables 6, 7, and 8, there were no significant differences observed between the control and experimental groups in terms of gender, age, and English proficiency for both the experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups.

Table 5. The Rater Reliability Indices for Rater 1 and 2

	Pre-test	Post-test
Inter-rater Reliability	82.9	84.1
Rater No.1	95.1	97.4
Rater No.2	96.6	94.8

Table 6. Checking gender preexisting differences

		male	Female	Total
Control	Count	13	14	27
	% within group	48.10%	51.90%	100.00%
Experimental	Count	14	16	30
	% within group	46.70%	53.30%	100.00%
Total	Count	27	30	57
	% within group	47.40%	52.60%	100.00%

Table 7. Comparing the age differences between the control and experimental groups

Group	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p value
Control	20	26	22.814	1.545	0.297	0.239	0.812
Experimental	19	27	22.933	2.116	0.386		

Table 8. Comparison of English proficiency differences between the control and experimental groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	p value
Control	27	426.33	70.319	13.533	0.475	0.637
Experimental	30	417.3	72.897	13.309		

3.1 Research Hypothesis and Questions

To assess the hypotheses, a two-way repeated measure ANOVA was employed along with a post hoc test (Bonferroni) to examine potential group and test score variations, specifically for Task 1 and Task 2. Task 1 data

are presented in Tables 9, 10, and 11, accompanied by Figure 3, while Task 2 information is displayed in Tables 12, 13, and 14, along with Figure 4.

Table 9. Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD) of the holistic score for Task1

TEST	Group	N	Mean	SD
Pre-test	Control	27	4.056	0.467
	Experimental	30	4.05	0.480
Post test	Control	27	5.148	0.412
	Experimental	30	5.633	0.642
Follow up	Control	27	5.185	0.442
	Experimental	30	5.617	0.552

The results of the repeated measure ANOVA concerning the holistic scores for Task 1 indicated a statistically significant interaction between group and test ($F(2, 110) = 10.811, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.164$). Subsequently, to assess the related hypothesis, a post hoc test (Bonferroni) was applied to compare the mean scores. Table 9 illustrates that the range of differences among the intra-group results for the three tests is consistent.

The first null hypothesis posits that the utilization of model essays has no impact on learners' writing proficiency, as defined by their gain scores in the IELTS mock writing test.

Table 10. The mean differences in holistic scores between the Experimental and Control Groups across the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test for Task 1

		Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control Vs Experimental		pretest	0.006	0.126	0.965	0.0
		Post test	-0.485*	0.145	<0.05	0.17
		Follow up	-0.431*	0.133	<0.05	0.16

The results of the Bonferroni test revealed that the holistic scores obtained for Task 1 between the Control Group (CG) and Experimental Group (EG) in the pretest were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). However, significant differences emerged between the CG and EG for holistic scores in both the post-test ($p < 0.05$) and delayed post-test ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, the first hypothesis was not supported, indicating that the model essay approach effectively improved the candidates' writing proficiency (see Table 10). Table 11 provides an overview of the effectiveness of the model essay approach.

Table 11. The difference of Task 1 holistic mean scores between tests in Experimental and Control Groups for Task1

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control	Pre test	Post test	-1.093*	0.076	<0.05	
	Pre test	Follow up	-1.130*	0.094	<0.05	0.806
	Post test	Follow up	-0.037	0.081	1	
Experimental	Pre test	Post test	-1.583*	0.072	<0.05	
	Pre test	Follow up	-1.567*	0.089	<0.05	0.905
	Post test	Follow up	0.017	0.077	1	

The Bonferroni test results revealed that within the Experimental Group (EG), there was a significant difference in the holistic score of Task 1 between the pretest and post-test ($p < 0.05$). The mean holistic score for Task 1 in the EG increased by 1.58 units. However, there was no significant difference in the mean holistic score between the post-test and delayed post-test in the EG ($p > 0.05$).

In contrast, the results for the Control Group (CG) showed no significant difference in the mean holistic score of Task 1 between the pretest and post-test ($p > 0.05$). The mean holistic score in the CG improved by 1.09 units. Similarly, there was no significant difference in the mean holistic score between the post-test and delayed post-test in the CG ($p > 0.05$). It is notable that Figure 3 illustrates the improvement of the groups.

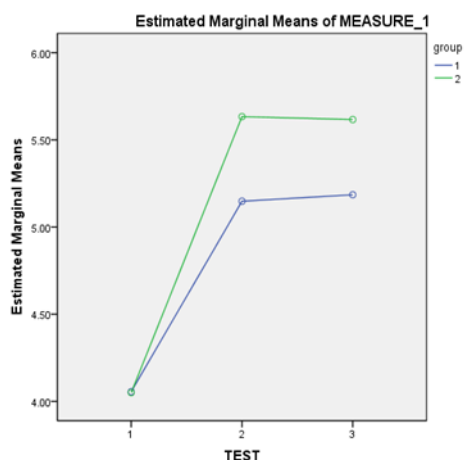


Figure 2. Mean plot of the holistic score of Task1 in both EG (2) and CG (1) groups

As can be seen, for both groups the Task1 holistic gain score increased in the posttest, however there is no considerable change with an interval of one month, when the delayed posttest was administered. Also, for Task 2 the overall procedures and changes were similar to Task 1.

Table 12. Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD) of the holistic score of Task2

TEST	Group	N	Mean	SD
pre test	Control	27	4.13	0.565
	Experimental	30	3.883	0.536
Post test	Control	27	5.407	0.555
	Experimental	30	5.833	0.634
Follow up	Control	27	5.315	0.540
	Experimental	30	5.783	0.486

Table 13. The holistic mean difference between Experimental and Control Groups in pre, post and delayed posttest for Task2

	Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control Vs Experimental	pretest	0.246	0.146	0.097	0.049
	Post test	-0.426*	0.159	0.01	0.116
	Follow up	-0.469*	0.136	0.001	0.178

Table 14. The holistic mean score difference between the tests in Experimental and Control Group for Task2

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control	Pretest	Post test	-1.278*	0.07	<0.05	0.863
	Pretest	Follow up	-1.185*	0.077	<0.05	
	Post test	Follow up	0.093	0.059	0.369	
Experimental	Pretest	Post test	-1.950*	0.067	<0.05	0.944
	Pretest	Follow up	-1.900*	0.073	<0.05	
	Post test	Follow up	0.05	0.056	1	

Therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected and it is concluded that the model essay was effective on the improvement of the holistic score of participants for Task 2.

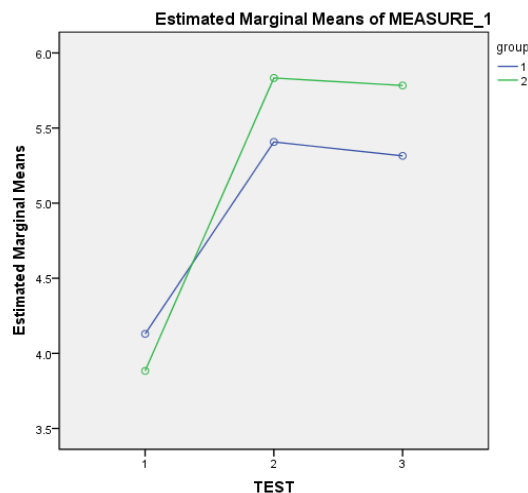


Figure 3. Mean plot for the holistic score of Task 2 in both EG (2) and CG (1) groups

3.2 Question 1

The primary research question addressed in this study referred to discerning the variance in gain scores within the IELTS holistic scoring system for mock writing assessments between two distinct groups: the experimental group (which received model essays) and the control group. This analysis encompassed both Academic writing Task 1 and Task 2. The salient findings from the study can be summarized as follows:

(1) **Statistical Significance in Gain Scores:** A statistically significant difference was observed when comparing the pretest and post-test holistic scores for both Task 1 and Task 2 within the experimental group. This indicates that the intervention involving the provision of model essays had a noticeable impact on the writing performance of participants.

(2) **Lack of Significance between Post-test and Delayed Test:** Interestingly, there was no statistically significant distinction in the mean holistic scores between the post-test and the subsequent delayed test for both Task 1 and Task 2 within the experimental group. This suggests that the improvements registered in the immediate post-test were not maintained over time.

(3) **Control Group's Parallel Results:** In a parallel manner, the control group also demonstrated statistically significant differences between their pretest and posttest holistic scores for both Task 1 and Task 2. This implies that some form of improvement was occurring even in the absence of the model essay intervention. However, like the experimental group, the control group did not exhibit a significant discrepancy between their post-test and delayed test scores.

(4) **Magnitude of Improvement Comparison:** While both groups displayed improvements, the experimental group (EG) outperformed the control group (CG). The mean holistic scores for the control group increased by 1.09 units for Task 1 and 1.27 units for Task 2. Conversely, the experimental group achieved greater improvements, with 1.58- and 1.95-unit improvements for Task 1 and Task 2, respectively.

(5) **Consistency with Prior L2 Writing Research:** These findings align with earlier studies in the field of second language (L2) writing. Specifically, they echo research that involved comparing students' original writing with its reformulated version following syntactic writing instruction, as well as research that compared students' original writing with model essays (Green, 2007; Truscott, 2007).

In conclusion, this study's results suggest that providing model essays to students in the experimental group led to statistically significant improvements in their writing scores for both Task 1 and Task 2, surpassing the gains observed in the control group. However, it's noteworthy that the progress achieved immediately after the intervention was not maintained when assessed in a delayed post-test. These findings are consistent with previous research in the realm of L2 writing.

3.2.1 Effect of both Writing Instruction on Mean Score of Task Response Score for Task 1 and Task 2 in EG and CG Statistics and Data Analysis

The Bonferroni test outcomes provide valuable insights into the task response scores, highlighting differences between the Control Group (CG) and the Experimental Group (EG) at different assessment stages. Tables 15, 16, and 17 show the relevant statistics. These key findings are summarized in Table 16:

(1) In the pre-test, the comparison of task response scores between the CG and EG yielded non-significant results ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that, initially, there was no discernible difference in task response performance between the two groups.

(2) In the post-test, the analysis revealed a significant contrast between the EG and CG for the task response rubric of Task 1 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that after the intervention, the EG displayed a notably better task response performance compared to the CG.

(3) This distinction between the EG and CG persisted in the delayed post-test, with statistical significance observed ($p < 0.05$). It is evident that the EG continued to maintain a superior level of task response performance compared to the CG.

Further insights into the magnitude of these changes are provided in Table 17, which includes both p-values and Mean Differences:

(4) For the EG, there was a substantial improvement of 1.86 units in the mean task response score. However, it's noteworthy that there was no significant difference between the post-test and delayed post-test scores ($p > 0.05$). This implies that the improvements achieved in task response were sustained over time within the EG.

(5) Similarly, the CG also demonstrated a statistically significant improvement ($p < 0.05$) with a mean increase of 1.33 units in task response scores. Nevertheless, akin to the EG, there was no meaningful difference between the post-test and delayed post-test scores ($p > 0.05$) in the CG. This suggests that the improvement in task response within the CG was not time-sensitive but remained consistent.

Table 15. Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD) of task response score in Task1

TEST	Group	N	Mean	SD
pre test	Control	27	4.056	0.594
	Experimental	30	3.983	0.549
Post test	Control	27	5.389	0.543
	Experimental	30	5.85	0.800
Follow up	Control	27	5.333	0.679
	Experimental	30	5.817	0.748

Table 16. Task response mean the difference between Experimental and Control Groups in pre, post and delayed posttest for Task1

	Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control Vs Experimental	pre test	0.072	0.151	0.635	0.049
	Post test	-0.461*	0.183	0.015	0.116
	Follow up	-0.483*	0.19	0.014	0.178

Table 17. The holistic mean score difference between tests in Experimental and Control Group for Task1

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control	Pretest	Post test	-1.278*	0.07	<0.05	
	Pretest	Follow up	-1.185*	0.077	<0.05	0.863
	Post test	Follow up	0.093	0.059	0.369	
Experimental	Pretest	Post test	-1.950*	0.067	<0.05	
	Pretest	Follow up	-1.900*	0.073	<0.05	0.944
	Post test	Follow up	0.05	0.056	1	

In summary, the Bonferroni test results and accompanying statistical values illustrate the significant improvements in task response scores for both the Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG) following the intervention. These improvements were sustained over time, as indicated by the lack of significant differences between post-test and delayed post-test scores within both groups. The findings accentuate the efficacy of the intervention in enhancing task response performance.

3.2.2 Task Response Score for Task 2

Table 18. Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD) for task response score in Task 2

TEST	Group	N	Mean	SD
pre test	Control	27	4.037	0.706
	Experimental	30	3.85	0.632
Post test	Control	27	5.519	0.802
	Experimental	30	6.133	0.706
Follow up	Control	27	5.389	0.813
	Experimental	30	6.117	0.611

Table 19. Task response mean: the difference between Experimental and Control Groups in pre, post and delayed posttest for Task2

	Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control Vs Experimental	pretest	0.187	0.177	0.296	0.02
	Post test	-0.615*	0.2	0.003	0.147
	Follow up	-0.728*	0.189	<0.05	0.212

Table 20. The holistic mean score: the difference between tests in Experimental and Control Group for Task2

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control	Pretest	Post test	-1.481*	0.078	<0.05	
	Pretest	Follow up	-1.352*	0.095	<0.05	0.874
	Post test	Follow up	0.13	0.084	0.389	
Experimental	Pretest	Post test	-2.283*	0.074	<0.05	
	Pretest	Follow up	-2.267*	0.09	<0.05	0.950
	Post test	Follow up	0.017	0.08	1	

The data presented in the tables suggests a similarity in the procedural patterns leading to developments in Task 2, akin to those observed in Task 1. Consequently, the null hypothesis regarding the absence of improvement in the 'task response/achievement' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric must be rejected. It is evident that both groups demonstrated improvements in the gain scores within the 'task response/achievement' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric.

3.3 Question 2

Research Question 2 was directed toward discerning disparities in the 'task response/achievement' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric between the experimental group (receiving model essays) and the control group across academic writing tasks, specifically Task 1 and Task 2.

The outcomes of the Bonferroni test revealed that the task response scores exhibited significant differences between the Control Group (CG) and the Experimental Group (EG) for both Task 1 and Task 2 in both the posttest and the delayed posttest when compared to the pretest. Notably, the degree of improvement in both tasks was more pronounced within the Experimental Group (EG). Consequently, it can be inferred that model essays served as a more efficacious feedback tool compared to mere error correction or reformulated text. The rationale behind the heightened level of significance in the "task response" sub-scale disparity between the EG and CG groups, concerning the two sub-scales of the IELTS writing rubric, stems from the EG group's adeptness in recognizing and integrating the descriptors outlined in the band descriptor, which were explicitly explained in their model texts as part of the written corrective feedback. Additionally, the model essays provided during the

treatment sessions facilitated a noticeable distinction of topic keywords, thereby contributing to the group's enhanced performance.

3.3.1 Effect of Both Interventions on Mean Score of Coherence and Cohesion: Task 1 & Task 2

The subsequent null hypothesis posited that the implementation of model essays would have no evident impact on students' gain scores within the 'cohesion & coherence' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric, encompassing both Task 1 and Task 2. To assess its validity, a similar analytical procedure was applied as in the previous hypotheses. The results, once again, unequivocally demonstrated the presence of a statistically significant distinction between the two sets of scores for both Task 1 and Task 2. As anticipated, this null hypothesis was also rejected, affirming the efficacy of the instructional approach involving model essays. Comprehensive statistical analysis for Task 1 can be found in Tables 21, 22, and 23, while analogous results for Task 2 are available in Tables 24, 25, and 26.

Table 21. Descriptive Statistics (Mean, SD) of Coherence & Cohesion Scores for Task 1

TEST	Group	N	Mean	SD
Pre test	Control	27	3.759	0.594
	Experimental	30	3.717	0.449
Post test	Control	27	4.611	0.610
	Experimental	30	5.05	0.735
Follow up	Control	27	4.648	0.569
	Experimental	30	5.05	0.674

Table 22. Differences in Coherence & Cohesion Means Between Experimental and Control Groups in Pre, Post, and Delayed Posttest for Task 1

	Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control Vs. Experimental	pre test	0.043	0.139	0.76	0.002
	Post test	-0.439*	0.18	0.018	0.097
	Follow up	-0.402*	0.166	0.019	0.096

Table 23. Differences in Coherence & Cohesion Mean Scores Between Tests in the Experimental and Control Groups for Task 1

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Eta Squared
Control	Pre test	Post test	-0.852*	0.11	<0.05	
	Pre test	Follow up	-0.889*	0.117	<0.05	0.568
	Post test	Follow up	-0.037	0.099	1	
Experimental	Pre test	Post test	-1.333*	0.105	<0.05	
	Pre test	Follow up	-1.333*	0.111	<0.05	0.775
	Post test	Follow up	0	0.094	1	

The findings of the post hoc test unveiled a noteworthy disparity in the coherence score between the pretest and posttest within the experimental group, demonstrating statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, the mean coherence score within the experimental group exhibited a substantial increment of 1.33 units. However, it is notable that there was no remarkable variation in the coherence mean between the posttest and the subsequent delayed test ($p > 0.05$) within the same experimental group. A parallel pattern was observed in the control group, where the results similarly indicated statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Here, the mean coherence score within the control group demonstrated an increase of 0.852 units. However, similar to the experimental group, there was no observable disparity in the coherence mean between the posttest and the delayed test ($p > 0.05$) within the control group (as illustrated in Table 24).

Table 24. Descriptive statistic (Mean, SD) of coherence & cohesion scores for Task2

TEST	Group	Mean	SD
Pre test	Control	3.741	0.447
	Experimental	3.65	0.575
Post test	Control	4.741	0.544
	Experimental	5.167	0.813
Follow up	Control	4.704	0.697
	Experimental	5.15	0.721

Table 25. Coherence & cohesion means: the difference between Experimental and Control Groups in pre, post and delayed posttest for Task 2

	Test	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Squared	Eta
Control Vs. Experimental	pre test	0.091	0.137	0.512	0.008	
	Post test	-0.426*	0.185	0.025	0.088	
	Follow up	-0.446*	0.188	0.021	0.093	

Table 26. Coherence & cohesion means score difference between tests in Experimental and Control Group for Task 2

Group	(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference	SE	P value	Partial Squared	Eta
Control	Pre test	Post test	-1.000*	0.087	<0.05		
	Pre test	Follow up	-0.963*	0.112	<0.05	0.745	
	Post test	Follow up	0.037	0.118	1		
Experimental	Pre test	Post test	-1.517*	0.083	<0.05		
	Pre test	Follow up	-1.500*	0.106	<0.05	0.883	
	Post test	Follow up	0.017	0.112	1		

3.4 Question 3

The results of the study affirm the anticipated outcome for the third research question, which centers on whether a significant discrepancy exists in the 'coherence and cohesion' sub-scale of the IELTS writing scoring rubric between the experimental group (receiving model essays) and the control group.

The outcomes of the post hoc test substantiated the presence of a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores for 'coherence & cohesion' within both the Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG). However, it's crucial to note that the magnitude of improvement was not uniform across the two groups and tasks.

In Task 1, the EG demonstrated a substantial improvement of 1.33 units in their 'coherence & cohesion' score, while the CG exhibited an improvement of 0.852 units. In Task 2, the EG recorded an improvement of 1.51 units, while the CG achieved an improvement of 1 unit.

Beyond the conventional interpretation of these variations, a remarkable observation pertains to the differing levels of improvement between Task 1 and Task 2. This can be attributed to the unique characteristics of Task 2, where the provision of model essays offered students a more frequent opportunity to recognize and practice discourse-related elements. In contrast, Task 1 primarily requires students to extract and present key trends from graphic data, which is inherently more focused on descriptive essay writing with fixed sentential structures, report verbs, and data analysis.

Consequently, students engaging in Task 2 essays naturally grapple with discourse-related aspects such as paragraph organization, inter-sentential relationships, and coherence and cohesion, given the specific demands of this task. This distinction in task requirements likely contributed to the varying levels of improvement observed between Task 1 and Task 2 in both the experimental and control groups.

3.4.1 Correlation between Holistic Score and 2 Sub-scales of IELTS Writing Rubric in Post-test

Based on the findings from Pearson's correlation coefficients (Table 27), a noteworthy positive relationship emerged between IELTS scores and both task response ($r= 0.836, p < 0.01$) and coherence ($r= 0.775, p < 0.01$).

Table 27. Correlation between holistic score and two sub-scales of IELTS writing rubric

	IELTS	post-task response	post coherence
IELTS	1		
post task response	0.836**	1	
post coherence	0.775**	.639**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of additional analyses affirmed a significant relationship among the research variables, prompting the inclusion of all dimensions for hypothesis testing. The mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes and Preacher's SPSS PROCESS macro.

Table 28. Result of mediation analyses incorporating the model variables (post-test)

IV to Mediators (a paths)				
	Coefficient	SE	t	P value
Task response	0.5636	0.1419	3.9709	0.0002
Coherence	0.4302	0.1379	3.1189	0.0029
Direct Effects of Mediators on DV (b paths)				
Task response	0.2971	0.0713	4.1667	0.0001
Coherence	0.1498	0.072	2.0809	0.0425
Total Effect of IV on DV (c path)				
intervention	0.3852	0.1206	3.193	0.0023
Direct Effect of IV on DV (c' path)				
intervention	0.0516	0.0566	0.9122	0.3659

Table 29. Model Summary for DV Model

Model Summary for DV Model				
	R2	Adj R2	F	P value
model	0.8688	0.8559	67.5327	<0.01
Indirect Effects of IV on DV through Proposed Mediators (ab paths)				
	Data	Boot	Bias	SE
TOTAL	0.437	0.442	0.006	0.116
Task response	0.167	0.170	0.002	0.057
Coherence	0.064	0.062	-0.003	0.035

Dependent variable (Y) = IELTS SCORE

In the mediation analysis (Table 28 and 29), significant findings emerged regarding the effects of the intervention on two mediators. The intervention exhibited a significant positive impact on task response ($B= 0.563, p < 0.01$), coherence ($B= 0.430, p < 0.05$), lexical ($B= 0.401, p < 0.051$), and grammar ($B=0.392, p < 0.05$), as observed in the "a path." Additionally, both dimensions demonstrated a significant effect on IELTS scores, as evidenced in the "b paths."

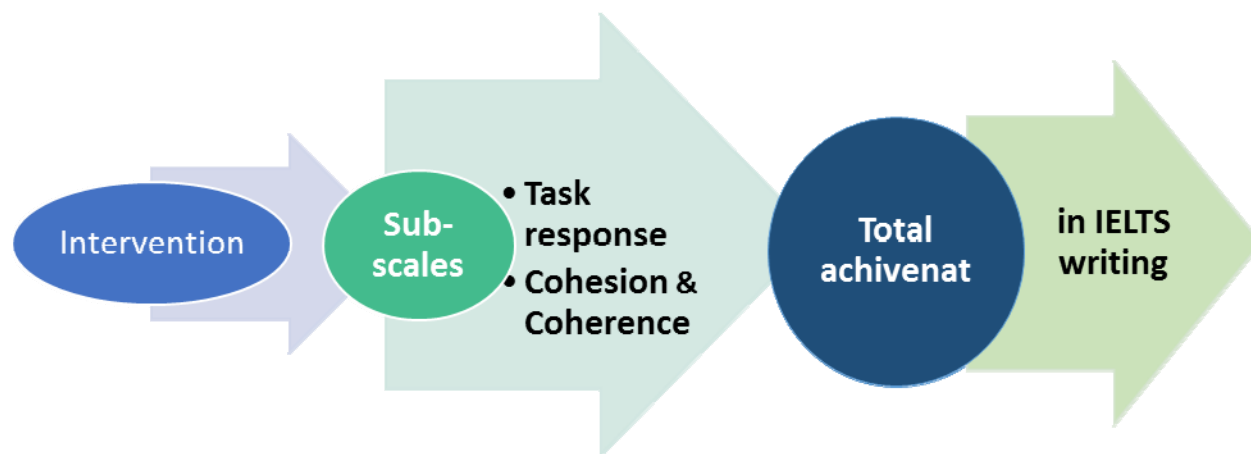


Figure 4. IELTS writing procedure.

4. Conclusion and Implications for Further Studies

The current experimental study delved into the effectiveness of model essays as a form of corrective feedback in the context of Iranian learners, shedding light on their potential to enhance language proficiency. The findings of this study confirmed that employing model essays as a pedagogical strategy facilitated the more effective language use by Iranian learners.

4.1 Intersecting Feedback and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The findings echo the growing body of research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that highlights the crucial role of feedback in language learning. Feedback, whether written or oral, serves as a bridge between learners' existing linguistic knowledge and their ability to apply it in real communication. It provides a mechanism for learners to reflect on their language production, identify errors or gaps in their proficiency, and make meaningful improvements.

Moreover, the positive correlation between IELTS scores and specific writing rubric sub-scales suggests that feedback interventions can influence broader language proficiency, impacting high-stakes language assessments like IELTS. This interplay between feedback and language proficiency underlines the interconnectedness of language learning and assessment.

4.2 Reflective Pedagogy and Self-Regulated Learning

The study's implications extend to pedagogical approaches that emphasize reflection and self-regulated learning. Model essays, by providing learners with clear examples of effective writing, enable them to engage in metacognitive processes. Learners can compare their own writing to the model essays, identify discrepancies, and iteratively improve their output. This self-monitoring and self-adjustment align with self-regulated learning theories, which emphasize learners' active participation in their own learning process.

4.3 Future Directions

While this study focused on model essays, the broader landscape of feedback in language pedagogy remains multifaceted and rich for exploration. Here are some avenues for future research:

- (1) **Comparative Analysis of Feedback Types:** Future studies can compare the effectiveness of different feedback types, including written feedback, oral feedback, peer feedback, and automated feedback systems. Such comparisons can clarify the relative advantages and disadvantages of each feedback modality in different language learning contexts.
- (2) **Longitudinal Studies:** Investigating the long-term impact of feedback interventions on language development and retention is crucial. Longitudinal studies can reveal whether the improvements observed in the short term persist over time or require ongoing support.
- (3) **Cultural and Contextual Variations:** The study primarily focused on Iranian learners. Future research can explore how the effectiveness of feedback interventions varies across different learner populations, cultural backgrounds, and educational contexts.
- (4) **Multimodal Feedback:** Integrating various feedback modalities, such as model essays, audio commentary,

and video exemplars, can provide a richer and more comprehensive feedback experience. This approach aligns with contemporary pedagogical trends that emphasize multimodal learning resources.

(5) Broader Examination of Scoring and Feedback Methods: As the study analyzed text according to the Task 2 band descriptor, future research can use various rubrics to examine the functionality of other scoring and feedback methods.

(6) Proficiency Tests with Global Recognition: Given the proliferation of proficiency tests with global recognition, future experiments can investigate the efficacy of feedback approaches for exams like CPE or domestic language proficiency assessments, providing valuable insights for the evolving landscape of language assessment and instruction.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the transformative potential of feedback interventions in language pedagogy, connecting with broader concepts in SLA, pedagogical theory, and self-regulated learning. As we continue to unravel the intricacies of language acquisition and instruction, research in feedback strategies remains at the forefront of innovations in language education.

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Redesigned Close Reading: An Integrated Approach to Improving the Writing of Chinese Learners

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Received: September 8, 2023

Accepted: October 20, 2023

Online Published: October 27, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p18

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p18>

Abstract

The study investigated the effects of close reading and writing among 13 Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners over an 11-week course. The course was designed to focus on multiple close readings for writing summaries, craft writing, and writing planning. The results of standardised reading and writing tests were used to quantitatively analyse the data using a paired sample t-test. The results indicated a statistically significant improvement in English learners' writing and demonstrated a relationship between reading and writing after the learners participated in the course. Subsequently, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were thematically analysed. Learners reported the benefits of repeated reading and annotating to written summaries, different reading purposes for developing writing skills, and the practice of after close reading discussions for writing planning and promoting independent writing. Therefore, our findings suggest that the implementation of redesigned close reading can be used to improve Chinese EFL learners' writing.

Keywords: close reading, craft writing, summary writing, writing, writing planning

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Close reading involves multiple readings of a given text, with each reading dedicated to analysing distinct aspects of the material, including its organisational structure, literary craftsmanship, and lexical choices. Close reading requires the formation of a connection between the reader and the text. Recently, researchers have focused on using close reading to enhance learners' writing abilities. For instance, Dollins (2016) used close reading to teach creative nonfiction writing. Timmermans and Johnson (2017) employed poetry reading for poetry writing instruction. Richeson (2019) required learners to read various materials and write an informational, history-based piece on Abraham Lincoln. Additionally, close reading has been further developed through the combination of close reading and self-regulated strategy development by Harris, Kim, Yim, Camping, and Graham (2019) and Harris, Ray, Graham, and Houston (2023), with the aim of cultivating learners' persuasive writing abilities. These studies suggest that close reading is an effective intervention to develop learners' writing regardless of differences in the types of texts and writing tasks.

Writing, which is one of the four basic language skills in foreign language learning, is of great importance not only in education but also in work, personal life, and citizenship (Bazerman et al., 2018; Hyland, 2018a). However, in China, despite the importance of learning English writing in secondary school, learners often fail to develop this skill (Huang, 2018; Wu, 2018). According to the official International English Language Training System (IELTS) website data for 2022, while the global average score for all the test takers was above 5.9, Chinese learners tended to score below this average, at approximately 5.8 (International English Language Training System, 2023). The reasons for this situation vary but can be categorised into linguistic, skill-related, and content challenges (Lin, 2019; Lv, 2015; Ngaji et al. 2018; Rbuiiae et al., 2019; Wingate, 2012; Zhai, 2016; Zhang, 2018).

Graham et al. (2013) underscored the importance of fostering a writing environment that supports students' learning, emphasising the significance of writing models and the emulation of writing samples. They advocated for the micro-level development of students' writing skills, strategies, and knowledge, which mirrors the foundational aspects of close reading. Close reading involves the comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the

content of and writing techniques employed in texts. Additionally, Graham et al. (2013) emphasised the engagement of students in thoughtful activities. This aligns with the purpose of the third reading, which is a portion of close reading that emphasises classroom discussions and the integration of learning with personal reflection. Close reading not only facilitates comprehension but also provides opportunities for noticing, which is crucial for improving writing skills, as suggested by Ortega's (2014) concept of 'noticing' in language learning. Dollins (2016) affirmed this synergy, stating that 'close reading can assist students in creating their own nonfiction texts with a unique and engaging writing style' (p. 49). This connection between close reading and writing underscores its role in fostering an optimal learning environment in which students can develop their writing abilities while engaging deeply with texts, ultimately enhancing their analytical and creative skills in tandem.

Although the feasibility and contribution of close reading to improve English learners' writing has been reported, certain research gaps remain. First, most prior studies have been conducted in the United States. Furthermore, these studies have predominantly employed quantitative or qualitative methodologies regarding learners' writing score or writing content, without sufficiently exploring learners' opinions about close reading. Additionally, researchers have utilised various writing tasks and processes, which lack specific structured frameworks that use close reading to teach writing. To address these gaps, this study aimed to ascertain the applicability of close reading in China. Moreover, this study sought to gain insight into the student perspectives to further explore the feasibility of close reading and offer practical teaching strategies for frontline educators. Therefore, this mixed-methods study explored whether using a redesigned close reading framework could improve Chinese EFL learners' writing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Close Reading

While close reading shares common objectives of pursuing in-depth comprehension, individualised approaches allow educators to customise their close reading instruction to meet specific needs. This study combined the two most-cited close reading frameworks of Shanahan (2012) and Fisher and Frey (2014). The two frameworks' similarities lie in using three readings, with the first two sharing similar objectives. Both frameworks aim for learners to grasp the article's main ideas in the first reading through annotation. Additionally, Shanahan (2012) emphasised using prior knowledge when necessary. Fisher and Frey (2014) acknowledged the significance of prior knowledge, suggesting that pre-reading instruction should be brief, strategic, and responsive to learners. Both frameworks employ text-dependent questions for the second reading to guide learners to focus on various aspects of the article. Fisher and Frey (2014) mentioned 'various aspects', whereas Shanahan's (2012) framework provides a more specific list regarding the organisation, literary devices, content evidence, and word choice. The most notable distinction emerges in the third reading. Shanahan (2012) emphasised deeper comprehension by discussing the article's underlying meaning, author's intent, and learners' analyses and sharing their understanding of the article's literary beauty. However, Fisher and Frey (2014) prioritised learner communication and applying what had been learned from previous reading activities.

The selection of texts for close reading differs from other reading methods, primarily in the following two aspects. First, the articles encompass different types of texts. For instance, Fisher and Frey (2012) and Welsch, et al (2019) recommended using brief texts for learners to read. Fisher and Frey (2014) also suggested interleaving different text types for coherent ideas. The other requirement is text complexity, involving using challenging texts to promote in-depth analysis without diminishing interest. If an article is easily understood, multiple readings would be meaningless, and learners would likely lose interest during repeated reading (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Richel, 2018; Shanahan, 2012; Welsch et al., 2019). Hinchman and Moore (2013) also supported the idea of complex text selection, believing in its benefits for enhancing learners' literacy skills, motivation, and success.

2.2 Writing

Writing is a crucial skill in foreign language learning, especially for learners aiming to achieve further academic development. By examining writing from various perspectives, we can comprehensively understand what writing entails. Yi (2009) and He et.al (2021) emphasised writing as one of the most challenging skills in that it involves not only a collection of separate sentences but also the process of logically integrating information within an article. It encompasses thinking, composing, and encoding language into a coherent text. Graham (2018) highlighted that writing requires the techniques, skills, and knowledge writers use to produce effective and engaging written content.

Post-reading writing tasks are widely employed to enhance learners' comprehensive writing abilities, including summary writing, craft writing, and writing planning before independent writing. Scholars generally agree that summarising skills are crucial due to frequent summary assignments, their study aid potential, and their necessity in complex tasks involving source integration (Kirkland & Mary1991). Summarising entails extracting vital information by reading and succinctly presenting the article's core for quick comprehension (Hood, 2008). Close reading enables learners to underline key information and integrate it into summaries. Studies on close reading and writing include summary writing in class activities and its benefits (Dollins, 2016; Fisher & Frey, 2014). Moreover, craft writing is important. Rand (2016) likened successful writers to skilled carpenters, emphasising crafts in both cases.

Similar to carpenters, writers aim for meaningful and enjoyable art. Researchers have focused on diverse writing skills, such as creativity, nonfiction, and informative writing. Each genre is unique. For instance, nonfiction involves dialogue insertion, perspective use, and descriptive language (Dollins, 2016). Poetic craft involves form, repetition, and rhyme (Timmermans & Johnson, 2017). Concerning close reading, Shanahan (2012) defined craft as text techniques, literary devices, and evidence quality. He advocated identifying techniques in the second read to comprehend the author's intention. Learners apply one or two techniques to their writing to create useful and aesthetically pleasing pieces. Finally, writing planning or outlining involves the creation of structures, themes, key points, and logical connections prior to writing. This offers clear guidance, resulting in coherent and consistent essays requiring little effort. Despite advocating different approaches, scholars such as Flower and Hayes (1981) and Hyland (2019) have emphasised the role of planning. In close reading, Harris et al. (2023) found that learners set goals, mark texts for ideas, and make plans to enhance final writing quality. After understanding content and structure, insights from the discussion refine the techniques and ideas into an essay outline while boosting writing quality and information delivery.

2.3 Close Reading and Writing

In their meta-analysis, Graham and Liu (2018) reviewed 89 studies to determine whether teaching reading enhances language learners' writing performance. They found that approximately 95% of the reviewed studies reported a positive contribution in the post-test, indicating that reading interventions improved learners' writing quality, spelling, and overall writing output. In addition, according to Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, careful and comprehensive teacher input increases learner output in reading activities. Recent research has shown that learners can collect information from reading materials to organise it along with their ideas during the writing process (Graham, 2018; Vandrick, 2018).

In addition, recent studies have examined the impact of close reading on learners' writing abilities across various text types and writing tasks. For instance, Dollins (2016) used mentor twin texts about frogs as reading material, encouraging learners to closely examine the articles and apply the acquired knowledge to enhance their creative nonfiction writing skills. The study found that by analysing the style, organisational features, descriptive language, academic vocabulary, and perspectives of the texts, learners could identify their strengths and successfully apply these crafting techniques to their writing.

Adopting a different purpose, Timmermans and Johnson (2017) focused on poetry and aimed to develop learners' ability to write poems. They demonstrated that explicit and cautious instructions and close analysis of poetry readings enabled learners to transfer their skills and knowledge to improve their poetry writing, focusing on form, repetition, rhyme, and variation in line length.

Richeson (2019) adopted a historic-based approach, in which learners read trade books and primary sources to gather information on Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the USA, and synthesised the information to write an informational, history-based writing piece. Using close reading and integrating information from articles, learners completed nonfiction writing tasks about this historical figure by applying text features learned from reading, such as adding bullets, pictures, timelines, and headers, to their writing. Richeson (2019) found that learners displayed enthusiasm for the course and a strong interest in learning.

Harris et al. (2019, 2023) explored the use of self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) for close reading to improve learners' persuasive and informative essays. Their findings revealed significant progress in learners' post-assessment scores for spelling, handwriting fluency, vocabulary, sentence proficiency, and discourse knowledge. SRSD aims to assist learners in learning and utilising close reading techniques, enhance learners' reading comprehension skills, and transfer learned content from reading to writing tasks, establishing the importance and feasibility of close reading for improving writing abilities.

These studies have demonstrated that integrating close reading practices into writing instruction can positively affect learners' writing skills regardless of the text and writing task type.

2.4 Research Objectives

This study assessed the contributions of the proposed approach using quantitative and qualitative data and sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent does a close reading and writing course contribute to EFL learners' writing?
- (2) Is learners' reading associated with writing after participating in a close reading and writing course?
- (3) What are learners' opinions of close reading and writing courses?

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effect of a close reading intervention on the writing ability of Chinese learners. To comprehensively examine the research problem, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted, as advocated by Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2014). The entire research had a duration of eleven weeks, during which learners participated in the pre-test in the first week, attended the course from the second to the tenth week, and completed the post-test and interviews in the final week.

3.2 Participant Characteristics

This study employed purposive sampling to recruit participants. Nineteen learners aged 16–30 years voluntarily enrolled in an English training school in Guiyang City, Guizhou Province, China. The school was advertised using posters. The participants included 13 women and six men. Among them, seven were college students, five were high school students, four were employees, and three were high school graduates. In purposive sampling, sites and participants are selected based on specific criteria. In this study, considering the required writing tasks and text difficulties, individuals lacking sufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge and those who were unable to independently complete reading and writing tasks were excluded to ensure learning progress. Therefore, this study included participants who had passed the College English Test Band 4 or scored at least 120 out of 150 on the on-campus English exam, which is the final test formulated by the Guizhou Provincial Education Bureau. Among the 19 recruited participants, four did not participate in the entire course, and two did not take the post-test; therefore, they were excluded from the final analysis. Thus, 13 participants completed all the courses and tests and were included in the study.

3.3 Measures

Three instruments were used to evaluate learners' reading and writing abilities, including the General Training module of IELTS for reading and writing respectively and semi-structured interviews. To ensure test reliability, complete reading and writing test questions were utilised. The reading section comprised five articles with 40 questions, and the writing section included two writing tasks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into learners' opinions of the effects of close reading on writing tasks for each reading, and 11 structured interview questions were asked after the course.

3.4 Procedures

Before the start of the class, learners were instructed to complete a reading and writing pre-test based on task prompts within two hours. Subsequently, a nine-week course was implemented using a redesigned close reading framework with the corresponding required writing task. After the course, the learners were asked to complete the same test as in the pre-test. Of the 19 participants, 13 fully participated in the course and completed the tests, and six learners voluntarily participated in the interviews.

3.5 Intervention

This study integrated and applied two often-cited close reading frameworks (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Shanahan, 2012), referencing other research on reading and writing. The corresponding writing exercises were designed based on the key focus for each stage of the close reading, ultimately achieving the goal of fostering independent learner writing. Figure 1 presents the instructional framework used in this study.

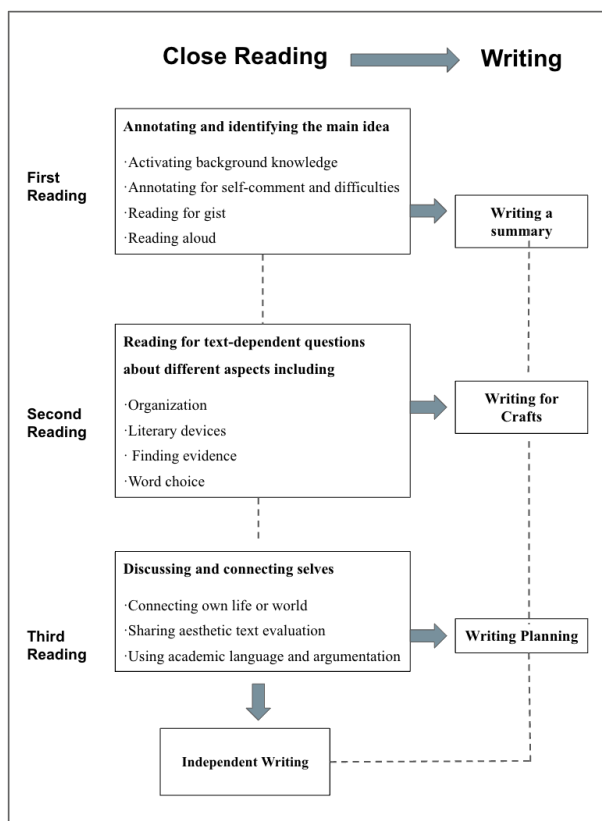


Figure 1. Research framework

3.5.1 First Reading

The goal of this reading stage was to annotate and comprehend the article's main ideas. After reading, learners were required to create a summary of the reading material. Before reading, they were provided with essential background knowledge and were tasked with independently reading the article and using self-designed symbols to annotate the text, including keywords, unfamiliar words, and comments. Subsequently, the learners used the highlighted keywords and their understanding of the text to write a summary of approximately 100–150 words.

3.5.2 Second Reading

In the second stage, learners were required to comprehend the article's content deeply, answer text-dependent questions, and provide evidence from the article. They were expected to consider the author's craft, including text organisation, literary devices, and word choices. As this stage focused on understanding how the author developed the article to achieve the writing purpose, the writing task for this stage involved practising prominent writing techniques employed in the reading material.

3.5.3 Third Reading

The objective of this stage was to enhance learners' appreciation of the article and engage them in discussions. When necessary, learners read specific paragraphs from the article. They were asked to use academic language and arguments from previous readings during the discussions. For the writing task, they were required to create a comprehensive plan for a complete article based on writing prompts provided by the teacher, integrating their learning and discussion outcomes from the first two stages. Following this plan, learners were expected to write complete articles independently.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Learners' writing and reading pre- and post-tests were assessed according to the official guidelines, with two raters to ensure fairness. One rater was the author, and the other was an IELTS writing teacher with more than 10 years of working experience in China. Paired-sample t-tests were conducted in SPSS 22 to assess improvements in writing by comparing post- and pre-test scores and establishing correlations between reading and writing post-test scores. Although the small sample was size, de Winter (2013) validated regular t-tests with two

participants, ensuring data accuracy; therefore, this method was appropriate for this study. To obtain learners' opinions on close reading, interviews were conducted with six interviewees. The interviews were conducted using the voice feature of WeChat, a popular social app in China. The entire process was recorded and transcribed using the built-in software on an iPhone. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2012) approach.

4. Results

4.1 Contribution of Close Reading to Writing

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of the 13 learners on the writing pre-test was 4.69, which increased to 5.61 on the writing post-test, for an average difference of 0.92. When evaluating the disparity between the post- and pre-test final writing scores, the significance level was below 0.001. This established substantial variance between post- and pre-test writing scores. Cohen's threshold designates values exceeding 1 as indicating a significant effect. We recorded a value of 1.44, demonstrating a statistically significant outcome. This underscored the fact that close reading led to a significant enhancement in learners' writing performance.

Table 1. Results of English writing pre- and post-tests (maximum score = 9)

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	df	t	sig	Effect Size
Pre-test	13	4.69	0.69	0.92	12	5.20	0.00*	1.44
Post-test	13	5.61	0.68					

Note. *p < .001.

4.2 Relationship Between Reading and Writing

To investigate the relationship between reading and writing, the post-test writing and reading scores of all learners were analysed using Pearson's correlation. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores for reading and writing were 6.08 and 5.62, respectively. The correlation coefficient (r) between reading and writing scores was 0.74, which was highly significant (P < 0.001). This indicated a strong positive correlation between these two variables. In other words, as the participants' reading scores increased, their writing scores also tended to increase. The strong statistical significance indicated the reliability of this correlation, demonstrating a robust and meaningful relationship between reading and writing among the 13 participants.

Table 2. Correlations of reading and writing pre- and post-test scores

	Reading (N = 13)	Writing (N = 13)
Mean	6.08	5.62
Std. Deviation	0.89	0.68
R	0.74	
P	0.00*	

Note. *p < .001.

4.3 Learners' Opinions on Close Reading and Writing

The thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed that the participants held a positive view of the course and felt that all three readings improved their writing (Table 3).

Table 3. Learners' opinions on close reading and writing

Close Reading	Theme	Definition
First reading	Repeated reading enhances comprehension for writing summaries.	Learners believed that multiple readings aid in comprehensively understanding the article's content, thereby facilitating the completion of the primary content summary.
	Annotating helps identify key information for summary writing.	Learners found that annotating during reading captures essential information and ensures accurate summary completion by utilising article-specific vocabulary.
Second reading	Reading with different intentions improves the transformation of reading to writing.	Learners stated that acquiring knowledge about the article's structure, author's writing techniques, and lexical choices contributes to understanding the article from a writer's perspective, encouraging them to apply similar techniques in their writing.
	Practising diverse writing crafts helps achieve distinct writing objectives.	Learners asserted that focusing on different articles' diverse writing styles and techniques contributes to achieving distinct writing objectives.
Third reading	Accumulating materials from articles and discussions aids the writing process.	Learners indicated that possessing relevant information and appropriate language related to the topic facilitates writing and mitigates writing apprehension.
	Efficient organisation and outlining increase writing confidence.	Learners opined that reading and writing exercises, along with information gathering, help them rapidly formulate the framework of an article.
	Outline-based writing fosters writing confidence.	Learners reported that adopting a well-structured outline for writing assists in expeditiously completing writing tasks and enhances the sense of accomplishment in writing.

4.3.1 Opinions on the First Reading

The participants acknowledged the significance of reading in summary writing. They perceived that the initial multiple readings enhanced their comprehension of the main ideas, forming a basis for summaries. Annotation while reading aided them in extracting crucial details, and using symbols to highlight key points aided in effective information gathering and expression in summaries.

Learner #1: I think that highlighting keywords while reading allows me to grasp the main information effectively, and then I have the information to finish the summary (writing).

Learner #4: The first stage requires more than one reading; (I think it) makes me understand (the text) more clearly, not ambiguously.

4.3.2 Opinions on the Second Reading

In the second stage, the learners grasped diverse writing crafts by reading texts and advancing their writing goals. The second reading also helped their reading and writing, aiding accurate knowledge application.

Learner #3: The most impressive thing for me was when you showed us those three videos and asked which one had a tense atmosphere. It was very useful. Using specific vocabulary to convey actions and describing the environment, like using words such as 'chill', 'figure', and 'noiseless', I remember all of them. This technique is highly useful.

Learner #6: I've learned that if you want to persuade readers, you can use some methods, like questions, examples, metaphors and so on... Like, the article uses 'a can of worms' to describe bad consequences, I think. As for another one, the story of the article structure is important to me. Although I knew it before in Chinese, I did not write it this way. This time, I was even able to write a short story in English. It wasn't hard.

4.3.3 Opinions on the Third Reading

Chinese learners recognised the reading process as a source of valuable information, language, and writing techniques. Combining post-reading discussions aided them with swift outline completion. A structured outline not only accelerated writing but also boosted their writing satisfaction.

Learner 4#: Ahh... (it) is that I know more information from each reading, and then we discuss opinions and article content. (So,) I have enough information to write, coupled with the outline we wrote together, which accelerates my writing. (It is) unlike before, when I needed a lot of time and could only write a little.

Learner 2#: From the whole process, I feel that what I can get from an article is the process from macro to micro... I know that a story or persuasive essay should contain a certain structure; they use different vocabulary. I also learned a new topic, the 'cancel culture'.

Learner 1#: For me, I think the whole class is for the final writing. As we discussed in the last stage, I had something to write about. In particular, I had never heard of the 'cancel culture' before, and I was unable to write about it before your class. Now, I have something to outline, and I could write the whole thing without stress.

Thus, learners perceived that each reading stage of close reading improved their writing abilities, and they were able to provide specific examples in the interviews.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Effect of Redesigned Close Reading on Writing

Both the quantitative and qualitative results indicated that the redesigned close reading and writing programme improved English writing skills among the participants. First, the participants' writing scores noticeably improved after they participated in the course. This finding was consistent with those of previous studies (Dollins, 2016; Harris et al., 2019, 2023; Richeson, 2019; Timmermans & Johnson, 2017), despite their use of different texts and study instruments. The diverse objectives of close reading allowed the participants to focus on various aspects of good writing, leading to a comprehensive enhancement of Chinese learners' writing abilities. As Graham et al. (2013) found from a cognitive or motivational perspective, 'improvements in writing skills, strategies, and knowledge serve as catalysts to students' overall writing development' (p. 11). Chinese students face various linguistic, skill-related, and content-related challenges in writing. The data analysis applied in the post-course assessment of learners in this study, using the IELTS band description, included assessments of these writing abilities. This suggests that the intervention implemented in this study could help learners address these issues including linguistic, skill-related, and content challenges.

Second, assessments of the participants' reading and writing showed a significant positive correlation after completing the redesigned close reading course. This indicated that improving reading abilities benefits their writing abilities. This was consistent with the findings presented by Graham et al. (2018) and Vandrickr (2018), which suggested that students can gather information from reading materials on various aspects, allowing them to organise information and their own ideas during the writing process. Compared to other reading methods, close reading pays comprehensive and in-depth attention to the text, aiding students in transferring knowledge from the 'model essays' more effectively.

Lastly, these reasons were supported by the respondents in this study. The participants believed that after achieving the goals of the first reading stage, independent and teacher-guided multiple readings and annotating key article keywords contributed to their ability to accurately and quickly grasp the main ideas of articles, thereby facilitating the completion of summary writing. After the second reading, the participants could differentiate vocabulary, article structure, and techniques used to achieve writing objectives in various articles. They could then apply these techniques to their own writing tasks, mastering different writing approaches for diverse article topics. Following the third reading, the participants generally agreed that post-reading discussions, combined with prior learning, effectively assisted them in generating suitable content and outlines, enabling the swift production of independent writing. Consequently, learners perceived that this integration of reading and writing comprehensively enhanced their writing skills, effectively addressing vocabulary, writing techniques, and the expansion of relevant topic content.

5.2 Close Reading and Writing Implementation

Reading materials should be diverse and drawn from various genres to utilise this framework effectively. This study employed a mix of informative, narrative, and persuasive texts. The participants recognised the importance of grasping writing organisation across genres, although explicit differentiation was not required. This exposure to diverse articles was valuable. Previous research (Brewer, 2018; Dollins, 2016; Eppley, 2015) suggested that close reading integration guides learners in creating various article types. Learners acknowledged this approach positively. Learner 3 highlighted how it aided skill transfer across text types, addressing the writing difficulties identified by Wingate (2012) and Rbuiiae et al. (2019). This indicated that appropriate close reading and writing combinations could enhance writing abilities. As Bourque (2016, p. 22) states, 'The more students read and become aware of an author's craft, the more we see them using these techniques in their writing. Students who read the most are often their strongest writers. This is not a random coincidence'.

Previous research has used diverse writing activities without a standardised approach, with many studies suggesting tasks such as summarising, crafting, planning, and independent writing. Learners' post-test data demonstrated that task efficacy boosted writing skills. Assignments revealed adept utilisation of article information, linking reading benefits to writing tasks. The outline and final writing showed the techniques learned. Each writing phase aligned with the reading goals: the initial reading captured the main ideas and keywords, which aided data extraction; the second reading emphasised the structure and craft applied to learner writing; the third reading fostered the expression of opinions. Integrating thoughts from prior tasks enabled the learners to create outlines and complete their writing.

This study indicated that implementing close reading as an intervention method could improve writing, with the participants expressing positive opinions about this approach. The main contribution of close reading lies in its emphasis on in-depth text analysis, providing learners with ample writing materials and skills. From the micro to macro perspectives, close reading assists learners in comprehending text themes, thereby guiding them in structuring and independently crafting written work. These contributions differentiate it from other methods aimed at improving writing proficiency. Moreover, due to its multifaceted approach to reading, this redesigned method addresses various factors contributing to poor writing performance among Chinese EFL learners, such as authentic vocabulary and grammar usage, text organisation, and content deficiencies. Consequently, the results of this study have significant implications for enhancing language learners' writing performance.

Future curriculum design should incorporate various text types to help learners differentiate among genres and address different writing purposes. Reading activities should provide moderate background knowledge to engage learners' interest and aid in comprehending unfamiliar topics in the first reading phase. In the second reading phase, attention should be directed towards the multiple facets of the text, including its structure, author's intent, vocabulary, and writing techniques. Finally, in the third reading phase, learners should be encouraged to discuss the reading material and extend their understanding by incorporating personal insights. Writing tasks should employ diverse assignments, including summary, craft, planned writing, and subsequent independent composition. Moreover, encouraging learners to integrate their perspectives into their writing through discussions could facilitate in-depth comprehension.

6. Limitations

This study had some limitations. First, the sample size was small, which limits the representativeness of the test results. Second, the study employed a one-group pre- and post-test design, which has certain inherent limitations. Due to the absence of a control group, other factors could have influenced the examined variables, which may have resulted in less accurate outcomes.

In future research, it is advisable for researchers to, first, involve a larger number of participants to enhance the representativeness of the test results. Second, incorporate a control group and a comparison group is recommended. This allows for a comparison with the intervention group, which aids in isolating the specific impact of the intervention. Lastly, since this study focused on the overall improvement of learners' abilities and did not provide a micro-level understanding of the specific areas in which learners demonstrated the most significant progress, future research can explore various facets in more detail.

Acknowledgments

This study was part of a project conducted as part of a master's degree programme in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Apasara Chinwonno, for her invaluable guidance and support throughout my master's project. The author received no financial support for this research or the authorship and publication of this article.

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Primary School EFL Teachers' Professional Agency in South China: An Ecological Perspective

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Received: October 9, 2023

Accepted: October 25, 2023

Online Published: October 27, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p30

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p30>

Abstract

Teacher agency has emerged as an important research field during the past decades, yet it remains a great challenge for primary school EFL teachers in China to appropriately enact their professional agency. Based upon a semester-long observation of the English classes in a primary school in Southern China, semi-structured interviews with the expert EFL teachers, documents such as the participating students' reflective journals, this qualitative study aims to explore how EFL teachers in Southern China enact their agency in the professional contexts in an ecological perspective.

Findings show that the expert EFL teachers have complicated agentic reactions towards different interplays with different microsystems in the ecological system of their working environment. Implications for further teacher professional development are discussed concerning how to enhance teachers' agency in internship and in-service training.

Keywords: teacher agency, ecological system, primary EFL teacher

1. Introduction

In February 2019, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council issued the document "China's Education Modernization 2035"; and in 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released the "Education 2030 Framework for Action", both of which emphasize the significant role of teachers in terms of the development of education and overall development of China. Additionally, in recent years, the State Council and the Ministry of Education have issued various policies and laws related to K-12 education, clarifying regulations for management and teaching in primary and secondary schools. Meanwhile, the Chinese government has made a national strategic decision to advance the development of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). On February 18, 2019, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Outline of Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area". Since the strategic goals were set for the development of the Greater Bay Area, the Chinese government has set up goals of educational and economic development of the Greater Bay Area. In this context, focusing on the professional context and agency of K-12 education EFL teachers in the Greater Bay Area concerns extensively with the professional identity and well-being of EFL teachers. However, despite the large number of teachers in China's K-12 education, there is limited research on the professional agency of K-12 EFL teachers, especially in the context of the Greater Bay Area. Therefore, studying the professional agency of K-12 EFL teachers, particularly on how they exercise their agency in the professional context of the Greater Bay Area, is both urgent and important from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this study explores the ways in which primary school EFL teachers practice their professional agency and the mechanisms that influence teachers' exercising their agency. It also investigates the interactive relationship between teachers' career development and the social environment, explores strategies and methods to enhance teacher agency and enriches research in the field of teacher agency.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, study on agency, professional agency, and teacher agency has become the focus of research in teacher development. Diverse perspectives have emerged in this field, particularly in the realm of teacher education research, including emotional engagement and teacher identity. Xu and Long (2020) conducted a

comprehensive review of foreign language teachers' agency, defining agency, reviewing on theoretical perspectives and research methods on agency, and suggesting on future research directions. Wei and Liu (2022) explored the status quo and influencing factors of agency in online teaching for university EFL teachers. Their findings suggest that while university EFL teachers generally have positive agency for online teaching, in practice they exert passive agency. Furthermore, perceptions of online teaching efficacy and active behavior outweigh the level of emotional identification with online teaching. Ruan (2020) discovered that university EFL teachers demonstrated active agency, beliefs and acted as mediators in EFL classroom teaching. The agency of teachers is closely related to individual and environmental factors. Tao and Gu (2016) found that teacher agency consists of choice and compensation capabilities. Teachers primarily practice agency in two ways: setting career development goals and corresponding action strategies and compensating for the negative impact of failed practices through cognitive and behavioral adjustments. Gao et al. (2018) interpreted how teachers exercise agency, making "choices" related to teaching and research and taking corresponding "actions" to facilitate their career development suited to their individual characteristics. Wang (2018) reviewed "Teacher Agency and Policy Responses in EFL Teaching" edited by Patrick C. L. Ng and Esther F. Boucher-Yip. The selected literature indicates: firstly, academia widely acknowledges the interplay between teacher agency and foreign language education policies; secondly, the book primarily employs the Ecological theory and Sociocultural theory to interpret how EFL teachers exercise agency; thirdly, action research, setting up teachers' communities of practice, and improving the sociocultural environment for education are effective ways to stimulate teacher agency. Liu & Chao (2018) studied the process of how teachers promote learner agency in language classrooms. Based on van Lier (2008), they constructed a technologically mediated classroom ecosystem framework through classroom observations and interviews.

However, up to the present, scholars in China have predominantly focused on the professional agency of university EFL teachers (Tao & Gu, 2016; Gao, 2018), with very limited research on the agency of K-12 EFL teachers in China. Given the unique characteristics of the professional environment, K-12 EFL teachers face distinct survival and developmental challenges compared to other teacher groups. How they exercise agency and enhance their professional identity amid professional challenges is an urgent and practically significant topic.

Teacher agency research has also become a hotspot in the field of international teacher education and professional development, particularly in countries like the United States and Finland (Billett, 2014; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Lasky, 2005; Miller & Gkonou, 2018; März & Kelchtermans, 2013; Priestley, Edwards, & Priestley, 2012; Haneda, Teemant & Sherman, 2017). Scholars have continuously explored and researched teacher agency, with a focus on how teachers use agency to enhance their professional development amid teaching reform (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Priestley et al., 2012; Vähäsantanen, 2015). Priestley et al. (2015), Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto (2015) found that teachers' perception of agency has a positive impact on shaping their professional identity and promoting professional development. Emirbayer & Mische (1998), Eteläpelto et al. (2013) analyzed the attributes of choice and practice in agency, exploring how individuals influence their life trajectories and environment. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) summarized the continuous characteristics of agency as the "chordal triad of human agency". Edwards (2013) examined the interpersonal aspects of agency, and eventually proposed the concept of "relational agency". Goller & Harteis (2017) explored the multifaceted attributes of agency, including competence, beliefs, and personality. Priestley et al. (2015) and Varghese et al. (2015) contended that teacher agency is at the core of teacher career development and learning, representing the cognitive beliefs and concepts that teachers, as agents, continually develop in the process of educational practice. This process involves proactive engagement with the educational environment, influencing teachers' individual teaching activities, research endeavors and professional growth.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. The Ecological Systems Theory serves as a model for individual development, emphasizing that individuals are nested within a series of interconnected environmental systems. In these systems, interactions between systems and individuals influence personal development. The innermost layer of the environmental hierarchy is the microsystem, followed by the mesosystem, which refers to the connections and relationships between various microsystems. Bronfenbrenner suggests that if there are strong positive connections between microsystems, optimal development may be achieved. The outer layer of the mesosystem is the exosystem, representing systems that indirectly impact individuals' development, even though the individuals are not directly involved. The outermost layer is the macrosystem, encompassing the cultural, subcultural, and societal environments present within the three aforementioned systems.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Research Site and Participants

W Primary School (pseudonym hereafter) was chosen as my research site out of two reasons. Firstly, two teachers from the school were my former students in G University. I had built up trustworthy relationships with them, which in qualitative research proves to be vital (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Secondly, W School has started its initiative in drama teaching ever since 2017, which is obviously a pioneer in the local district. And the students in W School are known for their outstanding performance in English dramas.

As early as 2014 the school started its first drama contest in order to encourage the students to develop their performance skills and language proficiency, which echoed with the school's motto to cultivate students with international awareness through various activities. Ever since then, almost all the EFL teachers in the school have been working together as the drama teaching team, and studied on drama relevant pedagogies, together with training programs by experts in drama education and multiliteracies pedagogy. With three years' teaching and research practice, a school-based teaching curriculum was set up, and the school officially incorporated English drama teaching into its curriculum in 2017 and the drama course became a school-based subject for students from the first graders to the sixth graders. With course consultancy and assessment from drama education experts and professors, discreet and serious selection of dramas and scripts together with repeated research on teaching pedagogy and learning from other schools and symposiums on dramas, the school finally officially took the initiative of teaching English drama to primary students.

In this research, the student participants were fifth graders from the school, who had learned English for at least four years. Since the drama teaching reform was mandatory in W School, with a greatly increased workload in class preparation, teachers had a long and hard time overcoming the difficulties. The teacher participants Yvonne and Lily had been in the teaching profession for over ten years and joined the drama team since 2016. In addition, Lily was the English team leader of Grade five, and head teacher of the student participants. The dramas were selectively chosen, and the scripts were kept original with minor adaptation to facilitate students' understanding, with the guidance of overseas teachers from North America.

Table 1. Demography of participants

Name	Gender	Degree	Years of teaching
Yvonne	Female	Bachelor	17
Lily	Female	Bachelor	15

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

I observed the participating teachers and their classes from September 12th, 2022 to December 15th, 2022, which covered three months, including observing daily classes in the classroom and the demo classes in the school auditorium, as well as the drama shows held by the school. The data collected include class observation and interview narratives of the participating teachers, journals from students as well as pictures together with videotapes and documents from the school. Certificates of honor and awards, together with documents were all together provided for triangulation. There were 39 and 36 students in each of the participating classes. I took class observation notes, did interviews with the teacher, had a brief interview with the vice principal who was held responsible for drama teaching and collected eight journals from the students. The classroom observation notes and interview narratives together with other data were transcribed word-to-word and were sent back to the participating teachers for double-check.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discusses the outcomes of semi-structured interviews conducted with the two EFL teachers Yvonne and Lily, analyzed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, in order to explore the teachers' perceptions of professional agency and the various ecological factors that influence the teacher's professional agency within the context of language education.

5.1 The Stories of the Two Teachers

After graduating from university, both Yvonne and Lily became teachers in their local public schools. Yvonne, after working for eight years, came to G province for a better future in her career. Firstly she worked in a private primary school in another city, and then moved to W School till today. Lily also began her career in a local public school, then she quickly developed from a novice to a promising experienced teacher in the school.. Seven years later, she moved to W School, and gradually became an expert teacher over the past years.

5.2 Teacher Agency in the Microsystem

5.2.1 Teacher-Student Interaction

The participating teachers also encountered a lot with their students in the working place. And they had experienced complicated feelings when dealing with critical incidents like conflicts with students. The participants' description shows that they exercised agency to adapt their practices through unreserved and uncritical adoption of management techniques (Lai, Li & Gong, 2016) and styles of interaction with students.

I teach students of Grade Five, and the children are more mature than the younger kids, with them I will communicate with a more equal attitude. And they are willing to accept my suggestions and care about me. Of course, that's also associated with my devotion and love for them, which is also a teacher's responsibility. The children in my class are actively engaged in activities and can always bring out the best of themselves. I'm still proud of that. And some children are also very sensible, when I am sick and couldn't speak, some children will be very concerned about me, either bringing me some laryngeal tablets, or writing me a note. That's the value and pride of being a teacher. Of course, things don't always go right. There are children who are naughty and troublesome and sometimes pushed me crazy. (Yvonne, September 24, 2022)

Yvonne's experience demonstrated that as students of their age were generally in bad need of equality, respect and democracy, treating them equally and respecting them would earn respect and care for her from students as reciprocal act, as illustrated by expressions like "sensible", "treat...equal attitude", "sensible" and "love".

The participants were in consensus in their perceptions of a healthy teacher-student relationship, especially after attending more teacher development workshops and lectures in the past few years and realizing the importance and benefits of building a student-teacher relationship based upon respect and trust.

5.2.2 Interaction between Colleagues

The participating teachers tended to have complicated feelings towards their relationship with colleagues, which involve both cooperation and competition in their teaching and working environment. The following examples well illustrate how the teachers enacted teacher agency within the relationship with colleagues.

For some friendly colleagues, I am easy-going and glad to communicate and learn from them; while for some hostile colleagues I won't cooperate with them unless required. Colleagues are the people with whom you can either make friends or simply keep acquaintance with. Some colleagues regard me as a rival because I take the position that they had thought of taking, so I need to keep a low profile at school. What I have to do is to teach well, do my job well and work together with my colleagues to achieve win-win results.

I hope I can gain support from my colleagues and work in a friendly environment. Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my relations with my colleagues. (Lily, September 22, 2022)

From the accounts of Lily, we can tell that the complicated feelings and relationships between colleagues like "friendly" and "hostile", "respect", "cooperate" and "win-win" co-existed and exerted great influence on the teacher's agentic enactment. They may work hard to face the challenge and competition in work, especially under the strict evaluation system, for which directly leads to a promotion in ranking or salary. In such circumstances, Lily enacted her agency to win the recognition of colleagues, as well as to play the best of her talent to ensure that she deserved the position she held within the community.

5.2.3 Parent-teacher Interaction

The result demonstrated that the relationship between teachers and parents of the students were somewhat complex, yet most of the encounters with parents are pleasant. Yvonne described her encounter with the parents as "(parents) cooperative, willing to follow the teachers' advice and communicate appropriately with teachers".

Most of the parents in our class have good self-cultivation and are very cooperative and willing to follow the teachers in their children's study. And they are engaged in competitions and activities in the class and the school. Like the English Drama Show this year, our class's PTA helped to cope with a lot of things, such as preparing for props, clothing, and makeup. Working with all these parents and students, I feel that what I do is worthwhile. I feel motivated and prospective about my students and the class. There are also exceptions, like the parents who are busy working all day long and couldn't make it to attend any activities. However, most of the parents would cooperate very well with me and my colleagues. Anyway, as a teacher, I always do my best because I believe in doing what I can with integrity. (Yvonne, September 22, 2022)

In this example, Yvonne's accounts of agentic encounters like "motivated and prospective", "worthwhile", "worried and anxious" together with her interplay with the often "cooperative" and "engaged" parents or uncooperative and non-participating parents shaped her with the belief of "doing what I can with integrity".

However, the fact that the actively agentic devotion of the parents greatly motivated the teacher manifested the mutual enhancement of the teacher-parent interplay.

5.2.4 Interaction Between Superiors and Subordinates

Teachers' agency towards their interaction with the administrators is the most subtle and changeable. It is important to point out that teachers may swing out of different reasons. Still, the research showed that the teachers felt both encouragement and pressure from administration at school.

I can understand that the principals and leaders are having a difficult time motivating everyone to follow the rules and join the reform. For us teachers, particularly for old folks likes me (laugh), what we can do is to teach well, and help the young teachers as they are having a hard time as well. If I can't do my job well, it'll be a big trouble for both myself and the administrators. I don't want trouble for myself. Of course, the evaluation system for teachers every year applies to every teacher, including the so-called senior teachers like me. And in every semester, we host the teaching contests in the school and research seminars are given to help teachers learn to do research. For some of the teachers, I know it's demanding for them, so I would volunteer to give a demo class to the new teachers since I know that's what I can do for the school. I felt really rewarded and fulfilled when I was told that they indeed learned a lot. (Lily, September 24, 2022)

In the example, Lily showed strong empathy with the school administrators which is demonstrated in the expressions like "having a difficult time", "demanding" etc, indicating the difficult situation the school administrators, particularly the principal faced. The strong empathy made it possible for her to actively join the school reform, volunteered to give demo classes to the young colleagues. Lily's outstanding English proficiency and teaching competence together with her strong empathy and sensitivity earned her respect from her colleagues and the administrators and reward as well.

5.3 Teachers' Agency in the Mesosystem and Exosystem

Beyond interactions with students, parents, colleagues and leaders, teachers also have extensive interactions with peers from other schools or authorities from the local bureaus of education, which also influence their agentic interplay within the system.

During the past few years, the school has invited a couple of experts in English teaching and drama education to deliver lectures and workshops; besides, we have invited a lot of pedagogical experts and English discipline leaders to help with our English curriculum design. These experts have been so helpful that we've invited some to come for several times. They solved our puzzles, supported us with new trials in teaching practice, and helped some teachers with enhancing classroom teaching and class design. Their generous help had greatly encouraged us. For me, I really felt grateful to Ms. C for her help with my project. From then on, I became more confident and enthusiastic in trying teaching innovation because I know the experts are there to support us. (Yvonne, September 24, 2022)

In Yvonne's accounts, expressions like "support", "help", "experts", "confidence", "confident and enthusiastic" manifested her strong agency towards the further training programs for the teachers. Her role as an expert teacher offered her the perspective to see the benefits and strengths of training programs better and more profoundly.

The mesosystem, which involves the interconnections between microsystems, revealed the importance of collaboration between teachers and school administrators. Yvonne noted that supportive relationships with administrators encouraged her and she also showed strong agency in initiating positive teacher-student, teacher-colleague and teacher-administrator interactions. Lily also demonstrated similar positive agency while showed concern and empathy with novice teachers in their interaction in the professional context.

Both teachers recognized the impact of external factors, such as policies and societal norms, on their professional agency. Yvonne and Lily mentioned the constraints imposed by standardized testing systems, which made their endeavor difficult in certain professional contexts.

5.4 Teachers' Agency in the Macrosystem

The macrosystem, representing broader cultural and societal values, played a significant role in shaping the teachers' agency. Both teachers acknowledged the emphasis on exam-oriented tradition in the current context. This influenced their strategies, with Yvonne seeking to incorporate various creative activities within the exam-driven curriculum, and Lily introducing programs based on PBL to balance traditional practices.

To be honest, I didn't pay much attention to national policies and the current affairs. I don't think they have much to do with me right now. In addition to preparing the materials to be used in the class, because we need

to use supplementary materials in English, I feel that I really don't have much time to pay attention to many policies every day. Unless it's related to the teacher's work, I may read a little bit when I read news in moments of WeChat, such as raising teachers' income or granting teachers the right for punishment. But in fact, some people have talked about it for many years, and I don't know whether it will be implemented. This is not something that ordinary people can care about. I will care more about the school's policies. After all, this is directly related to my work. (Lily, September 24, 2022)

Lily's accounts showed that the remote factor in the ecological context doesn't really have any direct impact on the participant but rather the more familiar and direct factor tended to have more direct and immediate consequences on the participants, as demonstrated in the expressions like "not have much to do with me", "ordinary people can care about", "more concerned about the policies in the school".

Based upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, the semi-structured interviews reveal the dynamic interplay between various ecological factors and the professional agency of EFL teachers in South China. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem all contribute to shaping teachers' perceptions of agency and their strategies for navigating challenges.

6. Conclusion

The findings align with Bronfenbrenner's theory, showcasing the complexity of the ecological systems and how they interact to influence teacher agency. The teachers' narratives highlight the importance of acknowledging the multi-layered influences on their agency, from classroom dynamics to societal expectations. This analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of factors that impact teaching practices and professional agency in their professional contexts.

In summary, the study underscores the significance of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in comprehending the factors that shape the professional agency of EFL teachers in South China, while highlighting the unique characteristics of teacher agency in the stream of educational reform initiatives. The theory offers a holistic framework that illuminates the interplay between various levels of influence, highlighting the intricate nature of agency and the strategies teachers employ to assert their autonomy in the context of language education.

Acknowledgements

The study is supported by the projects of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, EFL Teachers' agency in China: An Ecological Perspective and EFL Teachers' agency in Private Schools in China.

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The Application of Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA) in Private Colleges

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Received: September 21, 2023

Accepted: October 22, 2023

Online Published: October 27, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p37

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p37>

Abstract

College students' writing abilities were slowly progressing in the Chinese context. This problem was mainly due to the over-dependence on the teacher's feedback and the confusion about the writing assessment criteria. This resulted in the low ability of students to self-evaluate their essays. Thus, teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA) was introduced to guide students in finding the problems that existed in their peers' writing which in reverse could also help them detect similar errors in their writing. This study aimed to explore the practicality of the TSCA principle in private colleges with students' English proficiency below the average. Altogether 42 sophomores majoring in English were selected as the participants. They had taken English writing courses for one year and had some foundation. The questionnaire was given before the course to acquire students' attitudes towards the TSCA principle. Then students' writing scores for four assignments were collected during the implementation of the TSCA principle. The results showed that it was applicable to implement the TSCA principle in private colleges for lower-proficient students with their high willingness to this principle. Hopefully, students could have a general idea of writing assessment criteria and do self-evaluation in later autonomous learning.

Keywords: TSCA principle, students with lower English proficiency, the effectiveness of writing teaching

1. Introduction

Language teaching has been thoroughly studied for decades for its wide application in life and work. To have comprehensive English competence, the teaching focuses on the four skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. However, Chinese students are prone to be strong in reading and listening which are input skills, and weak in writing and speaking which are output skills. Therefore, enhancing Chinese students' English writing and speaking competence is crucial to making them more competent English users.

In 2015, Wen proposed a production-oriented approach (POA) to change current Chinese students' English learning weaknesses through learning-using integration. It attaches great importance to improving English instructions in English classes of Chinese tertiary education. Wen (2016) further perfected this methodology with a more detailed assessment principle, teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA). TSCA aims to improve Chinese students' English productive skills through teacher-guided student-centered classroom discussion. The emphasis of current studies relevant to TSCA has been put on English writing skills as it is rather difficult to enhance in the short term but easy to assess according to certain criteria. Under this circumstance, TSCA was adopted as part of the methodology in the Advanced English Writing class, aiming to improve students' writing ability. Unfortunately, few researchers focused on the application and possible problems of the TSCA principle when applied in private colleges with students of lower learning abilities. Thus, it is still a question to be solved whether students could improve their English writing ability and know how to evaluate peers' English writing work through this principle.

This paper is going to investigate the application of the TSCA principle in Advanced English Writing classes in private colleges. Quasi-experimental approach is adopted to collect valid statistics. All the participants are English major students and all the raters are English major teachers too. The research will examine whether Chinese students' writing skills could be improved through the TSCA principle and whether this principle could help them learn English writing autonomously. Hopefully, this principle could further solve the problem of the

separation of using and learning English in the Chinese context.

2. Literature Review

English writing has been investigated for decades through various studies from multiple perspectives. The research on how to improve Chinese students' English writing has also gone through dozens of years from overseas to domestic researchers. Wen's idea of POA has come up with a new direction for English writing teaching for domestic English teachers. Thus, it is worthwhile previewing the literature related to English writing teaching in the Chinese context, POA methodology, and TSCA principle to have a more comprehensive idea of the background.

2.1 *English Writing Teaching in the Chinese Context*

The studies in the field of English writing teaching in the Chinese context have covered various perspectives and learning stages. Most of the research focused on teaching instruction, error analysis, and cultural influence in English writing teaching from junior high school to universities (e.g. You, 2004; Bond & Smakman, 2016; Liu, 2022).

In terms of teaching instruction, researchers mainly emphasized how to use effective English language to give instructions to students so that they could have a more comprehensive understanding of what is good writing. From this perspective, You (2004) proposed that careful attention should be paid when adopting Western pedagogies in English writing class after she observed 10 teachers' Intensive Reading classes at a large Chinese university. Several years later, Wang (2007) specified the direction of English writing strategy instruction, claiming the importance of pre-writing strategy instruction as it could not only improve students' writing competence but also enhanced their confidence in English learning.

When it comes to error analysis, more attention was paid to grammatical errors. Bond & Smakman (2016) analyzed grammatical errors based on a corpus of academic writings by Chinese students in British universities, specifying two main grammatical errors made by Chinese undergraduates. They further highlighted the importance of cross-cultural adaption in English teaching and suggested teachers consider students' typical grammatical errors when teaching English writing.

Most of the grammatical analysis of Chinese students' writings indicated the possibility of cultural influence on incorrect expressions. Therefore, new insights could be gained through some studies on cultural influence in English writing teaching. Through comparative analysis, Liu (2022) emphasized the importance of cultural elements in English writing teaching which could help students better express themselves. A five-month study made by Zhang & Hadjioannou (2021) uncovered the importance of providing Chinese students with enough translanguaging spaces and clear instructions in English writing teaching, especially for academic English writing. They defined translanguaging as a "dynamic conceptualization of bi/multilingualism" (Zhang & Hadjioannou, 2021, p3) and identified it as a critical part of English writing competence for English as foreign language (EFL) learners.

In summary, most of the research on English writing teaching marked the importance of improving Chinese students' English writing competence from various perspectives rather than grammar and syntax. Scholars must find a more appropriate teaching approach in the Chinese context in order to help students realize the transcultural aspect of English writing.

2.2 *Production-oriented Approach (POA)*

In 2015, Wen proposed a production-oriented approach (POA) as a solution to the problematic English instructions in Chinese universities. The theory is based on an output-driven hypothesis, aiming to motivate students to effectively use English to express themselves rather than just passively understand English.

POA consists of three teaching principles, namely the learning-centered principle (LCP), learning-using integration principle (LUIP), and whole-person education principle (WPEP), aiming to educate Chinese students to be English users with both language knowledge and humanistic qualities like critical thinking and intercultural competence.

Moreover, POA developed three-phase teaching mediated by the teacher, which is quite different from the traditional teaching procedures of English in the Chinese context (Wen, 2016). The three phases are motivating, enabling, and assessing, attaching more importance to students' output rather than input as each phase requires them to express themselves more. At a motivating stage, students are motivated through scenarios of tasks or activities in the textbook and encouraged to perceive their weaknesses through the initial trial of the production. Then teachers could design a series of instructions to guide students to overcome their shortcomings and be

prepared for the final production at the next stage. The assessing phase is arranged as the last step to evaluate students' acquisition of the target language knowledge, which puts greater emphasis on constructing a set of criteria for various final language production. During this process, students will evaluate their work together with teachers as collaborative assessments to improve students' language outcomes and revised versions (Wen, 2016).

In conclusion, POA attaches great importance to students' language production and puts great emphasis on the LUIP, expecting that students' comprehensive English competence, especially output skills, could be improved through the transition from traditional language teaching procedures to new teaching principles and phases.

2.3 Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA)

As part of the POA principle, teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA) specifies the assessing phase through real-situation teaching by teachers in Chinese universities, aiming to help students establish a clearer system of assessing criteria to improve their ability of autonomous learning, especially for writing skills.

The assessment was developed into three phases, namely pre-class, in-class, and post-class (Wen, 2016). Sun and Wen (2018) gave a detailed teaching procedure for each phase through the investigation of a group of sophomores who majored in English. The research lasted for two academic years and included students' writings and revised versions, reflections, interviews, and teachers' reflective journals as collected data to justify the effectiveness of this principle and its specific teaching procedures. Teachers collected students' first drafts before class and selected the sample with typical problems that were expected to be identified by students in the next class. Teachers presented the selected sample to students in class and students were asked to assess and revise the sample writing in groups. Then students shared their revised version under teachers' guidance and were required to revise their first drafts after class according to what had been discussed in class. The final production was evaluated and compared to testify to the effectiveness of TSCA in this study. The research implied positive results of the implementation of TSCA in English writing teaching and supported teachers with detailed pedagogical procedures for later teaching practices in their classes (Sun & Wen, 2018).

As discussed above, TSCA has the theoretical foundation and practical experimentation in Chinese universities, especially with students of high English competence. However, it is still questionable whether it is effective in private colleges with students of medium or low English competence. Besides, few studies could shed light on the practicality of this issue. Thus, this research is carried out and tries to figure out the possibilities of implementing TSCA in the Advanced English Writing class.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Question

The research adopted quantitative methods to resolve two research questions:

- (1) Can TSCA be implemented in English majors of Chinese private colleges?
- (2) Is TSCA effective in improving students' writing abilities?

3.2 Participants

The participants are 42 English major students in their second year in one class in an Eastern private college. Their average age was 20 years old, with 5 male students and 37 female students. All students had passed the College English Test (CET) 6 and would take part in Test for English Majors (TEM) 4 at the end of the semester. Their English competencies were more or less the same. They took English Advanced Writing as a compulsory course in the second academic semester. Before this semester, they had studied English writing for almost one year and taken two English writing courses, one each semester, starting from the second semester in their first year. All the participants had acquired considerable knowledge of how to write English sentences and paragraphs but lacked instructions on how to write English passages, especially in different genres. Thus in the Advanced English Writing course, students were required to write complete passages in one particular genre which was argumentation. This could also help them prepare for the writing part in TEM 4 which also requires writing a short argumentative passage.

3.3 Instruments

Quantitative methods were adopted in this research. The data of the questionnaire was sorted and students' writing scores were collected and processed through SPSS.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was partially adapted from Altstaedter & Doolittle's (2014) and Montgomery & Baker's (2007). There are 16 items in total which are divided into two parts, namely students' perceptions towards peer

feedback (1-10) and students' perceptions towards teacher feedback (11-16). The first ten items are Likert-scale questions, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, altogether five options to receive students' perceptions towards peer feedback in three phases: going through one's partner's writing (Question 1-3), getting written comments from one's partner (Question 4-6) and taking part in the face-to-face peer feedback session (Question 7-10). The last six items are also Likert-scale questions but are described in percentages to further clarify the amount of accepted teacher feedback in students' drafts and final versions. The percentage is sorted from 0%, 30% to 50%, and 100% which covers four aspects of writing, namely ideas/content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary to get a more specific idea of students' perceptions towards teacher feedback.

Chinese was used to compile the items to ensure that all the students could understand the questionnaire easily and comprehensively. The reliability analysis of the questionnaire showed that the Cronbach's alpha is 0.94. Therefore, the statistics of this survey are valid and reliable.

3.3.2 Scores of Students' Writings

There were four topics assigned to students as homework to practice argumentative writing. Two of them were chosen from IELTS writing topics and the rest were picked from TEM 4 writing, which are all argumentative topics. Students were required to write at least 250 words for each topic and submit an e-version essay through dingding groups to the teacher. One topic was adopted as the pre-test assignment to test students' writing ability before the TSCA principle was implemented in class and another one was used as the post-test assignment to test students' writing ability after the implementation to see the effectiveness of this principle. The rest two topics were assigned as during-test assignments. For each of these two topics, students should hand in both the first draft and final production, which means six essays from every student were collected (See Table 1). Later, they were assessed with 100 as full scores from four aspects, namely grammar, vocabulary, content, and mechanics, by two other English major teachers as raters who also taught English writing classes. The average score of each student's writing by two raters would be collected for later data process by SPSS.

Table 1. Details of six essays

No. of the essay	The topic is from	Function
1	TEM 4 Writing	Pre-test assignment
2	IELTS Writing	First draft of first during-test assignment
3	IELTS Writing	Final product of first during-test assignment
4	IELTS Writing	First draft of second during-test assignment
5	IELTS Writing	Final product of second during-test assignment
6	TEM 4 Writing	Post-test assignment

3.4 Procedures

The questionnaire was sent and collected before the commencement of the spring semester in 2023. It was published online through the platform Wenjuanxing and students received the link at the same time on 10th February, 2023. The deadline for the questionnaire was 17th February 2023, so students had one week to finish it.

TSCA principle was implemented in Advanced English Writing class in the spring semester from 20th February 2023 to 9th June 2023, nearly 4 months. Students have this course once a week, so altogether they had 16 classes which were divided into three periods.

The first period was at the commencement of the semester in the first class, before the TSCA principle was implemented. During this period, students got a brief understanding of English writing, including genres and some general ideas. Then they were required to finish a pre-test assignment with a given topic to test their original writing ability. This assignment was handed in before the beginning of the next class and it would only be assessed by two raters without any feedback from the teacher or peers.

The second period started from the second class, adapting the teaching procedures of TSCA principles put forward by Sun & Wen (2018), but modified a few steps to fit in with students' lower English competence compared with public universities. This period included three stages: pre-stage, during-stage, post-stage.

At the pre-stage, different from Sun & Wen's (2018) procedure, more teacher guidance was added to help students better understand the task and form a clearer idea about what kind of product was expected from them. Meanwhile, the teacher offered students different writing techniques to help them write a complete

argumentative essay, which was recognized as a top differentiation from the practice of Sun & Wen (2018). After class, students were required to write an argumentation with a given topic and hand in the first draft before the beginning of the next stage. Teachers went through all the homework collected to find one or two samples with typical problems.

At the during-stage, the teacher first gave students an evaluation outline according to the writing techniques taught previously. This outline basically included four to five aspects concerning grammar, content, vocabulary, and coherence. Then students evaluated and discussed chosen samples in groups according to this outline for about 10 minutes before the representative of each group shared their comments with the rest of the class. During the sharing, the teacher supported students with some scaffoldings or hints if they found it difficult to make some comments at seemingly strange points in the samples, which is another differentiation from Sun & Wen (2018).

Post-stage was no different from Sun & Wen (2018), focusing on students' final production which was revised according to the evaluation of the sample writing and collected before the next class. Both students' final writings and first drafts were rated by two other English major teachers at the end of this period.

The third period was at the end of the semester in the second last class. Students were assigned post-test writing with fixed topics and handed in before the end of the semester to test their writing ability after the implementation of the TSCA principle. The writings would be assessed by raters as well and all the writings' assessments finished before the end of June 2023.

3.5 Data Collection

When all the procedures of the questionnaire and teaching process were finished, the data was fully collected for processing. Altogether 42 questionnaires were sent and all of them were collected as valid answers. The statistics were sorted by the Wenjuanxing platform to see its distribution and extremum. The data of all writings were processed through SPSS, using a paired t-test to see the variation between three groups of pair statistics, pre-test and post-test, and the first draft and final version of the first and second topics.

4. Results Analysis

4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was 100% collected and students' general attitudes towards the TSCA principle were clearly shown by the results which could be divided into four parts.

When going through their partners' writing, most students chose "neutral" as their responses, accounting for almost 54%. They didn't recognize the importance of reading peer writing but accepted its necessity. This might be due to the lack of the experience of peer assessment in terms of writing assignments. So they didn't perceive the advantages of reading through their partners' writing and the possibilities of getting some useful tips for their writing. The second most chosen option is "agree", which is a mild preference, indicating that there were a small number of students hoping to experience peer evaluation in writing class.

When it comes to getting written comments from their partners, different from the first part, most students were inclined to accept their partners' comments, but fewer students thought their partners' comments would be useful for their writing and would improve their writing quality. For items 5 and 6, almost 51% of students held a neutral attitude and for the rest, the most chosen option was still "agree". A possible explanation can be found in several previous references, suggesting that students trusted teachers' feedback more for its authority and reliability, and sometimes questioned the validity of their peers' responses (Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006).

The third part concerns taking part in face-to-face peer feedback. The result is similar to the first part, students holding neutral attitudes were slightly more than those with agreeable attitudes. The former accounted for nearly 50% while the latter accounted for nearly 38%. One noticeable point is that for item 7 about face-to-face meetings, more than 8% of students chose "strongly agree", which was the highest among the 10 items, and implied that some students recognized the importance and necessity of this meeting. However, from the perspective of students, the usefulness and reliability of such face-to-face meeting was not very high.

The last part is about students' acceptance of the teacher's feedback. Most students chose to read all the feedback the teacher gave for their first draft and final product, accounting for 53% and 63% respectively. It suggests that students pay more attention to the quality of the final product and less attention to the quality of the first draft. This might be the reason why the progress of their writing skills was quite slow. When it comes to accepting the teacher's feedback, fewer students chose to consider all of them when improving their writing and more students chose to consider 70% of the teacher's feedback. This indicates that although students believed more in the teacher's feedback, they still questioned or doubted some of the feedback and thought they were not suitable for

their writing. That might be due to too high authority on teacher feedback and less mutual negotiation between students and the teacher (Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). The last two items are concerned with the component of the teacher's feedback for each essay. Most students perceived teachers' feedback as half concerned with spelling and punctuation and half concerned with content and structure.

From the results of the questionnaire, it could be inferred that students were interested in the peer evaluation mode in terms of writing but questioned the reliability and usefulness of peer feedback. Besides, they recognized the authority of the teacher's feedback but also held a few questions about its suitability. Thus, it is necessary to introduce the TSCA principle as a new assessment mode to overcome the drawbacks of peer evaluation and teacher feedback.

4.2 Scores of Students' Writings

Through the implementation of the TSCA principle in Advanced English Writing class, there were a total of six essays collected with average scores rated by two other English major teachers. These six essays were divided into three groups, namely no.1 and no.6, no.2 and no. 3, and no.4 and no.5. All three groups were first calculated the mean value and then tested by paired t-test to see the variation.

Table 2. Mean value of writing scores of six assignments

No. of the assignment	Mean value of writing scores
1	77.19
2	77.93
3	80.67
4	77.17
5	78.67
6	79.02

From Table 2, it can be inferred that the mean scores of both the post-test assignment and the final version of the during-test assignments are higher than those of the pre-test assignment and the first draft of the during-test assignments with minor differences, indicating students' improvement of writing ability after the implementation of TSCA principle.

At the same time, a paired t-test was applied to further test the variation between these three groups.

Table 3. Results of paired t-test

	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.
V6-V1	10.246	1.581	1.190	41	0.241
V3-V2	6.685	1.031	2.655	41	0.011
V5-V4	2.330	0.359	4.173	41	<.001

It was shown in Table 3, except for the first group, the rest two groups had a great significant difference with a p-value less than 0.05. On average, the writing scores of the final version were significantly higher than those of the first draft for the two during-test assignments with the t value of 2.655 and 4.173 respectively, suggesting the improvement of students' writing ability with the implementation of the TSCA principle. Besides, the average writing scores of the post-test assignment were also higher than those of the pre-test assignment with a t-value of 1.190, but there seemed no significant difference with a p-value more than 0.05, suggesting the result might be accidental.

In conclusion, students could write better after they received feedback from their peers and instruction from the teacher. They knew how to improve their first draft according to the outline of the assessment criteria and discussion with peers and the teacher. The increase in the writing scores from the first draft to the final version indicated the usefulness of the improved version of the TSCA principle in private colleges with lower-competency students.

5. Discussion

5.1 Practicality of TSCA in English Majors of Chinese Private Colleges

The answers to the questionnaire from students implied that both teacher feedback and peer assessment have advantages and disadvantages. The result reflected that students were less inclined to accept peer feedback or

consider it when revising the first draft, but they did recognize the necessity and indispensability of peer assessment during the writing process. At the same time, the learners regarded teacher feedback as the authority, but still questioned or doubted some of it and ignored it when improving the final version. This advises the implementation of the TSCA principle which combines teacher feedback with peer evaluation to better make up for the problems taken by the disadvantages of using them independently (Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006).

With careful design and well-prepared guidance, students with lower competency could improve their writing ability by reading their partners' writings and interacting with the teacher at the assessment stage. Through the observation of the class, with the teacher teaching writing techniques and giving the assessment criteria beforehand, it could be easier for students to make comments on their classmates' writings. Even if students were struck by some problems, they could quickly go on with the scaffolding provided by the teacher. If it is possible, students could also acquire the assessment criteria of writing and conduct autonomous learning in the future. It demonstrated that they could evaluate their writings on their own without the help of the teacher, further proving the practicality of the TSCA principle in English majors in Chinese private colleges.

5.2 Effectiveness of TSCA for Improving Students' Writing Abilities

The result of the mean value and the paired t-test clearly showed the usefulness and effectiveness of an improved version of the TSCA principle in terms of enhancing students' writing abilities. The writing scores of learners increased slightly after the implementation of the TSCA principle. It demonstrated not only students' acceptance of this teaching principle but also consciously employed techniques taught by this principle. Before the implementation, the biggest problem was whether students with low competence could keep up with the teacher's procedures and make some progress in their writing. However, from the statistical results of students' writing scores, it could be figured out that the implementation of an improved version of the TSCA principle enhances students' writing abilities. The writing assessment criteria were actually a little bit harder than students' current level, so they needed someone else to help them approach the Zone of Approximal Development (ZPD) (Sun, 2020). According to the results, students with lower competency could follow the teacher's guidance and complete the task with satisfactory results through the peer discussion, which indicated their progress beyond their current level. Hopefully, they could also learn from the writing criteria given by the instructor in class and self-evaluate the writings in later autonomous learning, which would greatly improve their learning efficiency and effectiveness (Sun, 2020).

6. Conclusion

This research aims to investigate the possibility and effectiveness of the TSCA principle in English majors in Chinese private colleges. As Chinese students have been confused by the little improvement in English writing ability for a long time, it is expected to find a solution through this investigation. Besides, it could give students some useful tips and instructions through analysis of students' feedback and productions.

With the results of the questionnaire and writing scores given by learners, the answers to the research questions are quite clear, which suggests that the improved version of the TSCA principle could be implemented with the careful guidance of the teacher to help students with low English proficiency to improve their English writing abilities. It could further help the learners improve their autonomous learning in terms of English writing through detailed writing criteria given by the instructors in class. With the statistical results of the writing scores, the usefulness and effectiveness of this principle are also obvious as the scores of students' final production increased when compared with those of the first draft. Hopefully, it could also shed light on second language writing teaching, especially from the perspective of the collaboration of teacher feedback and peer assessment.

Acknowledgment

This paper is part of the achievement of the project "Application of the TSCA principle in Advanced English Writing Class". Thanks to all the teachers and students who offered me great help and much information, which contributed to the production of this thesis.

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Instructional Toolkit for Outcome-Based Instruction on English Grammar of Thai EFL Students in the Thonburi District in Bangkok

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Received: September 28, 2023

Accepted: October 25, 2023

Online Published: October 27, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p45

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p45>

Abstract

The purposes of this research were to a) find out how well the new instructional toolkit works at improving students' English grammar skills in verb tense structures, b) investigate the effects of Thai EFL students' learning achievement in utilizing an instructional toolkit on the acquisition of English grammar, c) investigate Thai EFL undergraduate students' knowledge retention after teaching using an instructional toolkit, d) study relationships among study levels, English proficiency levels, and learning achievement of Thai EFL students on the acquisition of English grammar before and after utilizing an instructional toolkit, and e) explore the Thai EFL students' perceptions regarding the instructional toolkit in terms of design, retention development, and implementation. The sample was categorized into two groups: 100 primary students and 100 secondary students. All students were studying in public school in the Thonburi district in Bangkok, Thailand, using multilevel group research design. The instruments were a) an instructional toolkit, b) achievement tests, c) a questionnaire, and d) interviews. The data were collected before, during, and after conducting research. The data were analysed quantitatively, using SPSS to find out the frequency, mean (*M*), and standard deviation (*SD*) of the participants' perceptions regarding use of the instructional toolkit, and qualitatively using content analysis. The research revealed that a vast majority (95%) of students and teachers acknowledged the toolkit's efficiency and efficacy, with significant improvements noted post-intervention. Additionally, the toolkit effectively enhanced knowledge retention in verb tense structures across different educational levels, showing particular resonance with higher-grade students and those at intermediate proficiency. However, despite appreciation for its user-friendly design and retention-enhancing features, there was a clear recommendation for the inclusion of more diverse real-world examples in future iterations.

Keywords: instructional toolkit, study kit, outcome-based instruction, English grammar, verb tenses, structures of verb tenses, Thai EFL students

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Since 2008, the transition to outcome-based education (OBE) has been a critical milestone in Thailand's educational reform, shaping the pedagogical landscape in significant ways (Ministry of Education, 2008). The OBE model places less emphasis on instructional processes, focusing instead on predefined learning outcomes aligned with the Basic Education Core Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2008). This approach aims to equip students with the requisite knowledge and skills for societal participation and lifelong learning. Moreover, OBE has allowed schools to integrate local resources and instructional strategies to develop tailored curricula, thereby empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey (Pimpa & Moore, 2012).

One of the transformative aspects of OBE has been its impact on English language instruction. Given Thailand's policy on student-centered learning (Ministry of Education, 2008; Thamraksa, 2011), teachers have increasingly been expected to devise innovative instructional techniques. This pivot toward "instructional innovation" has grown in importance as a strategy for augmenting students' cognitive and linguistic capabilities, culminating in more effective learning environments (Lee, 2008). Educational innovation has been cited as a factor enhancing the overall efficiency of the learning process (Phochanukul, 2008).

However, the content, particularly in English language teaching (ELT), has not been without challenges. English,

as a global language, presents complexities that many Thai students grapple with, especially concerning grammatical elements like tenses (Rahman & Ali, 2015; Cakir, 2011). Despite the curricular emphasis on English from an early age, Thai students frequently encounter difficulties with tense usage, even at advanced educational stages. This has brought into focus the need for specialized instructional materials that can bridge this gap effectively.

Furthermore, the role of memorization as a foundational element in language learning cannot be overlooked (Bloom, 1956). Thai students' struggle with English verb tenses often stems from difficulties in memorizing the 12 different tense patterns (Hinnon, 2014). Existing teaching approaches have been found wanting in assisting students to overcome these memorization challenges. As Bloom's taxonomy suggests, mastery in recall has set the stage for deeper cognitive activities such as comprehension and application.

The recent initiatives by academics and educators to devise methods for assisting students in tense memorization have remained grounded in traditional pedagogy. In this context, the development of an instructional toolkit, as proposed in this study, offers a novel approach to facilitate the learning of verb tenses. The toolkit aims not only to enhance memorization but to encourage the analytical and application skills required for effective language use. It has been posited that this toolkit could significantly impact students' proficiency and attitudes toward English grammar, thereby fulfilling the broader educational goals of OBE (Lee, 2008).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The transition to outcome-based education (OBE) in Thailand since 2008 has significantly restructured the educational landscape, emphasizing the quality of the learning outcomes over the educational processes (Ministry of Education, 2008). This paradigmatic shift has particularly influenced the field of English language teaching (ELT), prompting educators to evolve and innovate their pedagogical approaches to better align with the OBE framework and cultivate self-sufficiency and lifelong learning among students (Thamraksa, 2011; Lee, 2008).

Despite these reforms, research indicates that Thai students encounter substantial difficulties in mastering English grammar, specifically in understanding and utilizing different verb tense structures (Hinnon, 2014; Rahman & Ali, 2015; Cakir, 2011). Traditional instructional methodologies, which have primarily centered on rote learning and memorization, have proven inadequate for overcoming these linguistic barriers. Hence, there exists a clear and present need for the innovation of instructional methods and resources that are not only compatible with the OBE approach but are also effective in aiding the acquisition and mastery of complex English grammatical structures, particularly verb tenses (Bloom, 1956).

These gaps and challenges make evident the necessity for an innovative instructional toolkit tailored for teaching English grammar. Such a toolkit should not only align with the principles of OBE but also incorporate innovative teaching methods that can assist in the effective memorization and application of English verb tense structures. This study aims to develop and assess an instructional toolkit focused on teaching English verb tenses and evaluate its impact on the grammar competence and attitudes of Thai EFL students in the Thonburi district of Bangkok.

By exploring the effects of this toolkit, the research aims to contribute to the development of effective, outcome-based instructional methods that can improve English grammar competence among Thai EFL students while also adhering to the nation's educational policies that advocate for instructional innovation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study aims to fill critical gaps in the field of ELT in Thailand, particularly with respect to OBE. The transition to OBE in Thailand's educational system since 2008 has necessitated pedagogical changes to meet established standards and goals (Ministry of Education, 2008). Despite this transition, resources and instructional toolkits specifically tailored to the needs and challenges of Thai EFL students have been limited.

The research addresses a persistent problem in English language acquisition among Thai EFL students—namely, the consistent difficulties faced by students in understanding and using verb tenses correctly, even after years of formal education (Rahman & Ali, 2015; Cakir, 2011). Bloom's taxonomy (1956) emphasizes the importance of memorization in laying the foundation for higher-order thinking skills. However, memorization of the 12 verb tenses remains a significant challenge for Thai EFL students (Hinnon, 2014).

By focusing on the development and assessment of an instructional toolkit for teaching English verb tenses within an OBE framework, this study has the potential to offer substantial benefits for both educators and students. For educators, the toolkit could serve as an innovative resource to supplement existing pedagogical approaches, making the teaching process more effective and aligning it more closely with OBE objectives.

For students, the toolkit aims to simplify the process of memorizing verb tenses, thereby increasing their grammatical accuracy and overall language proficiency. The study is also intended to assess students' attitudes toward the toolkit, providing valuable insights into its design, retention development, and implementation—factors crucial for the toolkit's ongoing refinement and future scalability.

Therefore, the study stands as a significant contribution to educational innovation, English language pedagogy and the broader discourse on OBE in Thailand, offering timely and relevant solutions to longstanding challenges in the field.

1.4 Research Objectives

- (1) To find out how well the new instructional toolkit works at improving students' English grammar skills in verb tense structures;
- (2) To investigate the effects of Thai EFL students' learning achievement in utilizing an instructional toolkit on the acquisition of English grammar;
- (3) To investigate Thai EFL primary- and secondary school students' knowledge retention after teaching using an instructional toolkit;
- (4) To study relationships among study levels, English proficiency levels, and learning achievement of Thai EFL students on the acquisition of English grammar before and after utilizing an instructional toolkit; and
- (5) To explore the Thai EFL students' perceptions regarding the instructional toolkit in terms of design, retention development, and implementation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Problems of Learning English Verb Tenses and Necessity of an Instructional Toolkit

2.1.1 Problems of Learning English Verb Tenses

Regarding the differences between the languages (English as a target language and Thai as a first language), it is difficult for Thai EFL learners to recognize the use of verb tenses. Most of them cannot even remember the structures of verb tenses, which would help them communicate with other foreigners accurately and meaningfully. This is because the structures of English sentences contain **time** and **action**, whereas Thai sentences contain only **time** in the structure. However, in any Thai sentence, if telling the time is necessary, time markers are added in the sentence as particles. Look at these three parallel sentences:

English sentences Meaning Thai sentences

(1) I eat breakfast. happens all the time (4) Chan kin kao.

(present) or repeatedly

(2) I ate breakfast. happens in the past and (5) Chan kin kao *laew*.

(past) action was complete

(3) I have eaten breakfast. happened in the past and (6) Chan *peng* kin kao

(past connected to there is a connection with present) the present

To illustrate, it is obvious that in Thai sentences, the word “kin,” which means “eat” in English, is used in every tense, whereas in English sentences the verb is changed according to tense. In other words, it can be said that in Thai sentences, verbs contain only action whereas verbs in English sentences contain both action and time. Consequently, this causes difficulty for Thai EFL learners, who have to remember all 12 verb tenses (12 forms of active voice and 12 forms of passive voice).

Thus, innovation in learning verb tense structure has become more important and necessary for all Thai EFL learners in the form of a tool to memorize all the structures first. In fact, being able to memorize verb tense structures is the first thing that learners should learn, before learning how to use verb tenses. This innovation, developed by the researcher, is called the **Instructional Toolkit for Learning and Teaching the Structures of Verb Tenses**. This study describes a) problems of learning verb tenses, b) developing a teaching toolkit, and c) satisfaction in using a toolkit for learning and teaching.

2.1.2 Necessity of an Instructional Toolkit

Despite the prevalence of generic instructional toolkits, there is a specific need for localized versions that are congruent with the cultural and academic environment in Thailand. For example, although English language instruction is vital, pedagogical techniques must acknowledge the unique difficulties Thai students face, including

mastering English verb tenses (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). This is where a specially designed toolkit can provide targeted exercises, visual aids, and interactive methods for a more effective learning experience.

Developing and distributing these toolkits are not without challenges. Significant issues to consider include the costs associated with development, ensuring equitable access across urban and rural areas, and training educators to utilize the toolkits effectively (Molenda, 2004). Instructional toolkits can serve as a practical medium to enrich the educational landscape in Thailand. However, the development process must be deeply rooted in understanding the specific needs and challenges that Thai students and educators face. Continued research is crucial for optimizing these toolkits for broader and more effective use in various educational contexts across Thailand.

2.2 An Instructional Toolkit

2.2.1 Development of an Instructional Toolkit

The foundation of learning a language is not comprehension but memorization. When one can remember things, one can further develop one's understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). The major problem in Thai learners' acquisition of English language skills is the inability to memorize all 12 structures of verb tenses (Hinnon, 2014). Inability to retain this grammar leads to inability to learn each tense's function and, later on, inability to analyze the differences between tenses. Nowadays, many scholars and teachers have presented ways to help learners memorize the 12 verb tenses. However, they still use traditional techniques. Thus, I have invented a toolkit to reduce the time required for learning to memorize the structures of verb tenses by developing an innovative toolkit for helping learners memorize the verb tenses. If they can remember all 12 verb tenses, they will find it easy to understand each verb tense's functions and communicate using them according to grammar rules. This innovative toolkit for teaching the 12 verb tenses with 24 structures (active and passive voices) includes training in its use for EFL Thai teachers at the basic education level throughout the country to enhance their effectiveness in learning and teaching English verb tenses.

Chawalit (n.d.) defined the term "instructional toolkit" or "instructional media" as "bringing materials, equipment, and methods to be employed in a systematic manner in the classroom in order to maximize the efficacy of learning and teaching." The Department of Technology and Educational Communication (2015) emphasised the importance of instructional media in terms of fostering learners' interests and facilitating students' comprehension of challenging subjects. According to the ADDIE Model (Molenda, 2004, p. 43), the activities involved in generating instructional media are characterised as follows: a) analysis, b) design, c) development, d) implementation, and e) evaluation. This has the potential to lead to a more student-centric, outcome-based education model (Thamraksa, 2012).

2.2.2 Instructional Toolkits in ELT: A Focus on Teaching English Tenses in Thai Contexts

Instructional toolkits in ELT serve as comprehensive guides that include a range of resources, activities, and techniques aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning experience. In Thailand, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), instructional toolkits are especially useful in addressing challenges related to English verb tenses. This section elaborates on related studies and results concerning the development and use of instructional toolkits for teaching tenses in ELT, particularly in Thai contexts.

In EFL classrooms, toolkits customized for specific grammatical features such as tenses can significantly impact students' comprehension. However, teachers who utilize a dedicated toolkit for teaching English tenses have never reported student engagement and performance in assessments compared with traditional methods. The toolkit integrates with learning by doing, was therefore, aiming to contextualize the use of different tenses.

The OBE approach is gaining momentum in Thai ELT contexts. In a study by Yanawongsa et al (2021), an OBE-aligned instructional toolkit for teaching tenses resulted in improved student performance and satisfaction. The study suggests that aligning teaching materials and methods with specific learning outcomes allows for more focused and effective instruction (Yanawongsa et al, 2021).

Integrating technology into instructional toolkits has also shown promise. A study by Marsaulina (2020) involving Thai university students revealed that using materials that incorporates digital platforms, including mobile applications for practising tenses, led to significant improvements in test scores. The study emphasizes that technology can make the learning process more engaging and interactive (Marsaulina, 2020).

Although these studies suggest positive outcomes from using instructional toolkits, there is a gap in large-scale, longitudinal studies that can substantiate the long-term efficacy of such tools. More studies are also needed to explore how these toolkits can be optimized for different learning environments and individual needs.

3. Method

3.1 Population and Setting

Multi-stage random sampling was used to select two groups of students for this study:

The first group consisted of 100 Thai EFL primary school students who were studying at state schools in Bangkok’s Thonburi area. Trained teachers taught these students, while the researcher acted as an observer.

The second group consisted of 100 Thai EFL secondary school students who were also studying at state schools in Bangkok’s Thonburi area. Trained teachers taught this group as well, employing an instructional toolkit for the teaching sessions, while the researcher once again acted as an observer.

The groups were differentiated by their educational levels and consisted of 50 lower-primary students, 50 upper-primary students, 50 lower-secondary students, and 50 upper-secondary students—all from state schools in Bangkok’s Thonburi district. Both groups underwent the same tests, received the same treatment, and were subjected to the same questionnaire and interview. This comprehensive approach was employed to examine the effects on students with varying levels of education before and after the utilization of the instructional toolkit. It also aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional toolkit when applied to students across different educational levels.

3.2 Instruments

Four instruments were utilized in this study: an achievement test, a questionnaire, an interview, and an instructional toolkit.

The achievement test served as a pretest, an immediate posttest (end-of-course test), and a delayed posttest. It included 60 multiple-choice questions focusing on verb tensing structures and their applied usage. Each testing took 15 minutes to demonstrate speed and accuracy before and after the use of the toolkit.

Upon conclusion of the research, a questionnaire was administered to gather participants’ attitudes and levels of satisfaction with the instructional toolkit, designed to improve their English grammatical competency. The questionnaire took approximately 5–10 minutes.

After the delayed posttest was administered, interviews were conducted to delve deeper into participants’ attitudes about the instructional toolkit’s utility. The interview took approximately 30 minutes for one focus group. These interviews served to corroborate the findings obtained through the questionnaires.

The instructional toolkit was developed and implemented as an integral part of the study’s treatment. It was designed as a learning aid to help students acquire and retain knowledge of verb tense structures. Development and quality check of the instructional toolkit took two months, and training teachers and implementing it in the classroom took 12 weeks (36 hours).

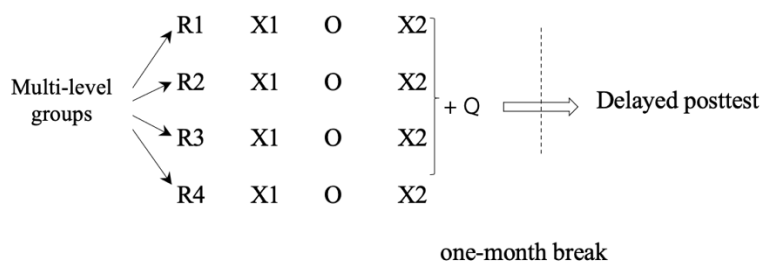


Figure 1. Research Design

This quasi-experimental employed pretests, immediate posttests, delayed posttests, questionnaires, and interviews to explore and compare differences in grammar learning achievement among various student groups using the instructional toolkit. The design involved four distinct groups of students, all taught with the same materials by the same qualified teachers. All four groups were subject to identical pretests, treatments (instructional toolkit), immediate posttests, questionnaires, and interviews. After a one-month hiatus, students retook the posttest (known as the delayed posttest) to assess knowledge retention.

In line with the research objectives, the following instruments were employed:

- (1) Instructional Toolkit: The instructional toolkit was developed and served as the treatment of the study. It functioned as a learning aid to enhance students' comprehension and retention of verb tense structures.
- (2) Achievement Tests: The achievement tests served as the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest which had the same questions, and each comprising 60 multiple-choice questions on the structures of verb tenses and their applied usage.
- (3) Questionnaire: After the study concluded, a questionnaire was administered to evaluate participants' experiences, opinions, and levels of satisfaction with the instructional toolkit aimed at enhancing their English grammar skills.
- (4) Interview: Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions of the use of the instructional toolkit and corroborate the findings of both the questionnaire and the tests.

3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data were collected in three phases. Initially, pretests were administered to analyze students' schemata of verb tense structures. Subsequently, in the second phase, the instructional toolkit developed in the first step was implemented. After the toolkit's implementation, students took a posttest to assess changes in their academic achievement. Concurrently, they were prompted to complete a questionnaire. This step gathered data from both the posttest and the questionnaire. A month later, students retook the posttest to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the instructional toolkit and the retention of their knowledge.

Data obtained from the achievement tests (pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest) were statistically analyzed using SPSS. Techniques such as analysis of variance (ANOVA) and calculation of the SD were employed to compare results both within and across groups. In addition, the questionnaire data were also processed through SPSS to determine the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the participants' perceptions regarding the use of the instructional toolkit. Qualitative techniques were employed to analyze the interviews, corroborating the findings of both the achievement tests and the questionnaires. As for the instructional toolkit, its efficacy was evaluated in terms of process efficiency and product efficiency, with the goal of ascertaining its effectiveness at the 95/95 quality level.

4. Results

4.1 Efficacy of Instructional Toolkit

To achieve the first objective, to find out how well the new instructional toolkit worked at improving students' English grammar skills in verb tense structures, interviews were conducted along with assessments. These interviews involved teachers, students, and an external language expert. They were designed to delve deeper into the perceived challenges, benefits, and general effectiveness of the instructional toolkit.

A qualitative analysis was conducted on the interview data, using thematic coding to identify recurrent themes regarding the instructional toolkit's effectiveness, process efficiency, and product efficiency. The findings are summarized as follows.

In terms of process efficiency, nearly all interviewed students (95%) stated that the instructional toolkit simplified their learning process in mastering English verb tense structures. The teachers concurred, with one stating, "The toolkit offers a structured approach that guides students step-by-step, making the process very efficient."

For the product efficiency, interview data revealed that 95% of students believed their grammar skills improved noticeably. Teachers confirmed this, with one saying, "Students who were struggling before could easily identify and correct mistakes in verb tense after using the toolkit."

For the quality level of the instructional innovation, both students and teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the toolkit achieved the 95/95 quality level, meaning it was efficient in the process and effective in the outcome. An external language expert also reviewed the toolkit and validated its quality, saying, "It meets all the criteria for top-tier language learning tools."

Regarding user experience, students found the toolkit user-friendly and engaging. "It didn't feel like a chore; I was actually having fun learning," said one student.

However, there were some areas for improvement. Although the toolkit was generally well received, some students (5%) and teachers suggested adding more advanced exercises and real-world examples to challenge students further.

In summary, the interviews provided strong qualitative evidence supporting the instructional toolkit's effectiveness in improving students' skills in English verb tense structures in terms of both process and product efficiency. The 95/95 quality level was largely achieved according to both students and expert evaluators. Future iterations of the toolkit may include more advanced exercises to address areas for improvement identified in the interviews.

4.2 Effects of Thai EFL Students' Learning Achievement in Utilizing an Instructional Toolkit

To answer this objective, to investigate the effects of Thai EFL students' learning achievement in utilizing an instructional toolkit on the acquisition of English grammar, an achievement test (comprising pretest and posttest) was used to investigate learning achievement. The achievement test was administered in Week 1 and Week 8 to observe any significant changes in students' grammar skills, particularly in verb tense structures. Meanwhile, the assessment form was employed in the same weeks to corroborate the findings of the achievement test.

The achievement test consisted of a pretest and a posttest to evaluate Thai EFL students' abilities in mastering English verb tense structures before and after using the instructional toolkit. A paired samples t-test was employed to calculate the scores, given that the same group was assessed in both tests. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the pre- and posttest in English Grammar Skills of Thai EFL students (30 items)

	n	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	200	13.72	4.25	-7.10	199	.000*
Posttest	200	21.46	3.71			

* $p < .001$

As Table 1 shows, the paired sample t-test highlighted a significant difference between the pretest ($M = 13.72$, $SD = 4.25$) and posttest ($M = 21.46$, $SD = 3.71$) scores, $t(29) = -7.10$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the instructional toolkit was effective in significantly improving the English grammar skills of Thai EFL students.

Regarding each grammatical component, specifically focusing on verb tense structures, such as simple past, present perfect, and future tenses, the students showed significant improvement, as Tables 2 – 4 show.

Table 2. Comparison of pre- and posttest on Simple Past Tense (10 Items)

	n	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	200	2.63	1.05	5.41	199	.000*
Posttest	200	4.21	0.95			

* $p < .001$

Table 2 reveals a significant improvement in mastering simple past tense, from a mean score of 2.63 in the pretest to 4.21 in the posttest ($t(199) = 5.41$, $p < .001$).

Table 3. Comparison of pre- and posttest on Present Perfect Tense (10 Items)

	n	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	200	2.71	1.15	4.43	199	.000*
Posttest	200	5.32	0.74			

* $p < .001$

Table 3 reveals a significant improvement in mastering present perfect tense, from a mean score of 2.71 in the pretest to 5.32 in the posttest ($t(199) = 4.43$, $p < .001$).

Table 4. Comparison of pre- and posttest on Future Tenses (10 Items)

	n	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	200	2.78	1.01	4.21	199	.000*
Posttest	200	4.11	0.66			

* $p < .001$

Table 4 reveals a significant improvement in mastering simple past tense, from a mean score of 2.78 in the pretest to 4.11 in the posttest ($t(199) = 4.21$, $p < .001$).

In sum, the results suggest that the instructional toolkit was highly effective in enhancing Thai EFL students' English grammar skills, particularly verb tense structures.

4.3 Investigation of Students' Knowledge Retention after Instruction

To investigate the research objective, to investigate Thai EFL undergraduate students' knowledge retention after teaching using an instructional toolkit, two main instruments were used: achievement tests and interviews. The achievement tests were administered at three different stages: pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest. These tests were used to gauge the students' grammatical competency in verb tense structures before and after utilization of the instructional toolkit. Interviews were conducted delayed posttest to deepen our understanding of the students' perspectives regarding the toolkit. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, with mean (M) and SD calculated for the achievement test scores. The results are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

4.3.1 Results of Achievement Test Across Different Educational Levels

Table 5. Achievement Test Results for Primary Students (60 Items)

	M	SD
Pretest	9.8	17.8
Immediate Posttest	45.2	6.9
Delayed Posttest	43.4	7.2

Table 5 shows that the primary students improved substantially from pretest ($M = 9.8$) to posttest ($M = 45.2$). Comparing the delayed posttest with the immediate posttest showed that the students retained the learning achievement of the structure of verb tenses.

Table 6. Achievement Test Results for Secondary Students (60 Items)

	M	SD
Pretest	22.5	10.1
Immediate Posttest	59.2	7.4
Delayed Posttest	51.4	8.0

Table 6 showed that the primary students improved substantially from pretest ($M = 22.5$) to posttest ($M = 59.2$). Comparing the delayed posttest with the immediate posttest showed that the students retained the learning achievement of the structure of verb tenses.

ANOVA tests were performed to establish the statistical significance of changes in test scores. For the lower-primary students, $F(2, 297) = 29.5, p < .001$, indicating significant improvement in their scores. Similarly, for the upper-primary students, $F(2, 297) = 33.6, p < .001$, also indicating a statistically significant improvement.

4.3.2 Results from Post-Delayed Posttest Interviews

After the delayed posttest, interviews were conducted to explore the students' perceptions of the instructional toolkit. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Three primary themes emerged:

- (1) Positive Feedback on Toolkit Utility: Most students found the toolkit easy to use and said it helped in understanding difficult verb tense structures.
- (2) Increased Confidence in English Grammar: Students reported feeling more confident in using various English verb tenses correctly after utilizing the toolkit.
- (3) Suggestions for Improvement: A few students mentioned that they would like more interactive activities to be included in future versions of the toolkit.

4.3.3 Cross-Validation of Results

The interview findings corroborated the statistical results, supporting the efficacy of the instructional toolkit in enhancing students' understanding and application of English verb tense structures. Both lower-primary and upper-primary students showed significant improvements in their achievement tests, and their feedback on the toolkit was overwhelmingly positive.

In summary, the instructional toolkit demonstrated a significant positive impact on students' English grammatical competency in verb tense structures, effectively fulfilling its intended purpose. The toolkit was well received by students across different educational levels, indicating its suitability for broad educational applications.

4.4 Relationships among Study Level, English Proficiency Levels, and Learning Achievement of Thai EFL Students on the Acquisition of English Grammar

To investigate the relationship among study levels, English proficiency levels, and learning achievement of English EFL students on the acquisition of English grammar before and after utilizing an instructional toolkit for the fourth objective, to study relationships among study levels, English proficiency levels, and learning achievement of Thai EFL students on the acquisition of English grammar before and after utilizing an instructional toolkit, questionnaires and assessment forms were used. Here are the revised results.

The questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the research phase and readministered after eight weeks of using the instructional toolkit. The questionnaire evaluated students' perceptions regarding the instructional toolkit's design, its impact on retention, and its applicability to future learning endeavours. The findings from the questionnaire were analyzed in relation to the students' study level and English proficiency.

Gender distribution was almost equal, with 48% male and 52% female participants. Regarding study levels, a majority were from grades 7–12, indicating the toolkit was utilized more at higher study levels.

The majority of students (around 90%) strongly agreed or agreed with the positive statements regarding the toolkit's design, its impact on retention, and its applicability to future learning endeavours. There was a notable correlation between study level and positive feedback, with higher-grade students expressing greater satisfaction. This suggests that as English EFL students progress in their study levels, the instructional toolkit becomes increasingly effective.

When cross-referenced with English proficiency levels, students with intermediate proficiency reported the most significant improvement in their verb tense structures after using the toolkit.

In conclusion, the instructional toolkit demonstrates promise in improving English EFL students' grasp of verb tense structures, with pronounced benefits for students at higher study levels and those with intermediate English proficiency.

4.5 Students' Perceptions regarding the Instructional Toolkit

To explore the Thai EFL students' perceptions regarding the instructional toolkit in terms of design, retention development, and implementation, semistructured interviews were conducted. Here are the revised results:

After using the instructional toolkit for a period of eight weeks, selected students from different study levels participated in semistructured interviews. The interview aimed to delve deeper into their experiences and thoughts about the toolkit. The interview focused on three main areas: the design of the toolkit, its impact on retention, and its real-world application.

Section 1: Design of the Instructional Toolkit

Most students expressed a positive view regarding the design. They found the layout to be intuitive and user-friendly. A Grade 9 student mentioned, "The icons and visual elements made it easy to navigate and find topics." However, some from the lower grades felt that a simpler design might have been more appealing to them.

Section 2: Retention Development using the Instructional Toolkit

The students unanimously agreed that the toolkit significantly enhanced their memory retention. A Grade 11 student expressed, "Before this, I used to forget verb tense structures, but with the exercises and quizzes in the toolkit, I find myself remembering them better." Students also appreciated the feedback mechanism in the toolkit, which provided instant clarifications on their errors, reinforcing correct grammar structures.

Section 3: Application of Knowledge for Real-world Scenarios

This section brought mixed reactions. While the majority felt more confident in applying their knowledge in real-world situations, some felt the need for more diverse examples that related to everyday scenarios. A Grade 10 student suggested, "Including more real-life conversations or dialogues can make it even more useful."

The semistructured interviews offered an in-depth perspective into the students' experiences. One common theme was the appreciation of the toolkit's interactive nature. Many highlighted how the exercises and quizzes made learning verb tense structures less tedious.

Most saw the feedback mechanism, especially the instant corrections, a pivotal feature. As one Grade 8 student mentioned, "I like how it corrects me immediately. I remember better when I know what mistake I made right away."

However, the need for more real-world examples was a consistent feedback point, suggesting that while the toolkit was effective in teaching the grammar structures, there might be room for improvement in terms of real-world application.

In summary, the Thai EFL students largely viewed the instructional toolkit positively. The design and its impact on retention were particularly praised. However, there is a clear avenue for enhancement in terms of integrating more real-life dialogues or examples to better prepare students for real-world English interactions.

5. Discussions, Implications, and Recommendations

5.1 Discussions

The research results, which underscore the efficacy of the instructional toolkit in enhancing English grammar skills, notably in verb tense structures among Thai EFL students, align with earlier studies indicating the importance of well-structured instructional aids in language acquisition (Kam, 2014, Babayev, 2021). Specifically, a substantial 95% of students reported notable enhancements in their learning processes and subsequent grammatical abilities. This statistic is particularly impactful when one considers the broader context of English language instruction and the challenges inherent in mastering verb tense structures (Collin, 2007).

5.1.1 Effects of the Instructional Toolkits for Thai EFL English Grammar Development

The instructional toolkit was successful in significantly improving mastery of verb tense structures. Teachers' affirmation of the toolkit's effectiveness strengthens this claim, reminiscent of previous research suggesting that pedagogical tools that receive educator endorsement often have a more considerable positive impact on student performance (Davidson et al, 2014). Notwithstanding its successes, feedback underscored the potential benefits of integrating more advanced exercises and real-world applications (Dabboub, 2019), suggesting avenues for further refinement.

5.1.2 Effects of Students' Experiences in Using Instructional Toolkits

The feedback gathered through semistructured interviews provides valuable insights into the students' experiences with the instructional toolkit. An overwhelming majority of students found the toolkit's design intuitive and user-friendly. This mirrors the work of Nguyen (2018), which postulated that user-friendly tools tend to resonate more with learners and lead to more favourable outcomes. Nevertheless, the preference of younger students for a more streamlined design underlines the importance of age-appropriate instructional design (Miller & Hom, 2013). Furthermore, the consensus regarding the toolkit's effectiveness in fostering memory retention through interactive exercises corroborates findings by Roediger and Butler (2011), highlighting the critical role of interactivity in learning.

5.1.3 The Effect of the Instructional Toolkit in Increasing Knowledge Retention

The marked improvements observed in the students' grammar skills post-intervention, particularly the growth in scores from pretest to posttest, underscore the toolkit's efficacy in not just knowledge acquisition but also its retention. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Hultberg et al. (2018), which highlighted that instruction methods that are simultaneously structured and interactive promote both immediate learning and long-term retention. Additionally, the correlation between students' proficiency levels and the toolkit's effectiveness recalls Coe et al's (2020) proposition that instructional tools may see varying efficacy levels based on learners' initial proficiency.

In conclusion, the present study, when juxtaposed against previous research, confirms the vital role of innovative, structured, and user-friendly instructional toolkits in facilitating English grammar learning, especially in settings like Thailand, where English is a foreign language. Future iterations of the toolkit may benefit from integrating richer real-world academic contexts.

5.2 Implications

The detailed interactions and explorations of the research results presented in our discussions afford various insights with respect to English grammar instruction among Thai EFL students. Drawing from these discussions, several implications emerge that could be instrumental in shaping the future of English language education in Thai contexts.

5.2.1 Implications for Teacher Training

The data underscored the effectiveness of a structured instructional toolkit in promoting mastery of verb tense structures among Thai EFL students. Thus, teacher training programs must consider incorporating modules that familiarize educators with such innovative instructional tools (Babayev, 2021). Given that not just the toolkit's use but its proper implementation impacts student outcomes (Kam, 2014), teacher training should emphasize both theoretical and hands-on sessions with such toolkits. Moreover, teachers should be equipped to provide constructive feedback, drawing from the toolkit's immediate correction features, which students lauded (Roediger & Butler, 2011). Training programs could also benefit from sessions highlighting the importance of real-world application in grammar

instruction (Dabboub, 2019), thereby ensuring that teachers are prepared to address the gaps the research identified.

5.2.2 Implications for School Policies

Schools in the Thonburi District and, potentially, beyond must recognize the significance of integrating instructional toolkits into their English curricula. Given that traditional pedagogical strategies were found to be less effective, especially concerning tense instruction (Rahman & Ali, 2015), school policies should be revisited. Policymakers could consider mandating the use of such instructional tools, especially given that they align well with Thailand's OBE framework (Ministry of Education, 2008). Furthermore, recognizing the different preferences based on student grade levels, schools might consider adopting different versions or modules of the toolkit tailored to age-appropriate designs (Nguyen, 2018). Additionally, feedback loops should be established, collecting input from both educators and students to ensure continuous refinement of the toolkit and its methodologies.

5.2.3 Implications for Thai EFL Students

For Thai EFL students, the instructional toolkit offers an avenue to transform their English grammar learning experience. Given the documented improvements in verb tense structure understanding, students should be encouraged to engage proactively with such tools (Collin, 2007). Beyond classroom settings, Thai EFL students could also utilize the toolkit for self-paced learning, reinforcing their grammar skills and addressing areas of difficulty. As the research highlighted a particularly positive reception of the toolkit's interactive features, students should be educated on the value of interactive learning and its potential to enhance retention (Roediger & Butler, 2011). Finally, students' feedback, especially regarding the integration of real-world scenarios, signals an inherent motivation to apply their language skills practically. This aspiration should be fostered, ensuring that EFL students see the value in and reap the rewards of their English language endeavours.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

Based on our detailed discussions and analyses, several areas emerge that would benefit from more in-depth investigation in future studies. Here are some recommendations:

5.3.1 Diverse Age Groups

Although this study focused on primary and secondary school students in the Thonburi district, future research could examine the instructional toolkit's applicability and efficacy for other age groups. This includes younger students in pre-primary education and older students in higher education. Understanding how different age groups interact with and benefit from such toolkits could provide broader insights into their overall effectiveness.

5.3.2 Toolkit Design Variations

Feedback from the students indicated varying preferences for toolkit design based on age groups. Further studies could investigate the development of age-specific or proficiency-specific modules within the toolkit. Such research would aim to create more tailored learning experiences for students at different stages of their learning journey.

5.3.3 Focus on Other Linguistic Elements

Although the present study emphasized verb tense structures, further research might explore the toolkit's adaptability for teaching other complex linguistic elements, such as modal verbs, phrasal verbs, or idiomatic expressions. This would provide a more comprehensive view of its potential as an all-encompassing EFL resource.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, in the fiscal year of 2022. The researcher is thankful to those who were involved in the study, which lasted a year.

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Research on the Promotion of EAP Teachers' Information Literacy under TPACK Framework in the Era of Digital Intelligence

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Received: September 30, 2023

Accepted: October 29, 2023

Online Published: October 30, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p57

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p57>

Abstract

Foreign language education is steadily transitioning into the digital teaching era, driven by advancements in digital information technology and artificial intelligence. The integration of digitalization technology into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction imposes increasingly demanding prerequisites on EAP educators' information literacy within the pedagogical landscape. Employing the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, this paper conducts a comprehensive examination of the knowledge components and distinctive attributes of EAP instructors in the age of digital intelligence. Through an in-depth assessment of the information literacy of EAP educators at a science and technology university, this study unveils a spectrum of challenges pertinent to information literacy in the domain of academic English instruction. Subsequently, the paper offers a set of recommendations for enhancing the information literacy competencies of academic English instructors, with the overarching objective of shedding light on the professional development of EAP educators.

Keywords: EAP teacher, information literacy, EAP teaching, TPACK

1. Introduction

As internationalization becomes increasingly integral to the landscape of higher education in China, numerous colleges and universities have embarked on the development of a novel college English curriculum. This progressive curriculum includes a range of courses, such as General English (EGP), English for Specific Purposes (notably Academic English or EAP), and Cross-Cultural Communication. Concurrently, the rapid evolution of information technology has propelled foreign language education into a transition from computer-aided instruction to the era of intelligent learning driven by artificial intelligence.

In this digitized foreign language teaching environment, educators are faced with the dual mandate of enhancing their Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) while concurrently endeavoring to incorporate digital technologies into curriculum development, educational resource creation, and innovative teaching methodologies. This paradigm shift undeniably calls into question the attitudes, psychology, and cognitive paradigms of college English instructors actively engaged in EAP reform, while concurrently presenting a new imperative for the mastery of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK).

Against this backdrop, the present study adopts the TPACK model as its analytical framework to scrutinize the manifestation of essential TPACK components within the domain of EAP pedagogy in the age of digital intelligence. The study seeks to offer valuable insights to inspire a greater number of college English educators to engage in EAP-oriented curriculum reform and advocate for the integration of digital intelligence technology in the teaching of EAP.

The study aligns with the following research questions:

- (1) What are the challenges faced by EAP instructors in the digital intelligence era, and how do core TPACK elements manifest in their pedagogical practices?
- (2) What practical suggestions can be offered to enhance information literacy within the realm of academic English instruction?"

2. TPACK Framework

The TPACK framework, stemming from the PCK model, was formally introduced by Mishra and Koehler in 2006 as a conceptualization of the essential knowledge for educators to effectively employ technology within specific instructional contexts (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Since its inception, this framework has been widely embraced as a guiding foundation for research and professional development within the realm of information technology. Eminent scholars, including Niess, have proposed diverse analytical frameworks to elucidate the composition and essence of TPACK. Niess, among others, asserts that TPACK comprises four integral elements: 1) The overarching concept of subject instruction infused with technology, which encompasses teachers' discernment of the purpose and objectives of employing technology in the teaching of specific subjects. 2) Knowledge of subject-specific instructional strategies integrating technology, signifying the proficiency educators possess in utilizing technology to illuminate subject matter and execute pedagogical activities designed to facilitate learners' comprehension of specific subject domains. 3) Competence in subject curricula and educational materials integrating technology, encapsulating educators' cognizance of how information technology impacts curriculum objectives and content, along with the selection of technology and resources for instructional materials. 4) Insight into students' utilization of technology for subject-specific learning, encompassing an understanding of students' learning characteristics within technological environments, identification of potential misconceptions and difficulties, and other relevant factors (Niess, 2005).

The strength of this theoretical framework lies in its holistic and interdisciplinary perspective, which examines the interplay between subject matter, teaching methodologies, and technology. It offers substantial practical guidance and operational utility for the cultivation of educators' TPACK knowledge. Additionally, it's well-suited for closely examining the characteristics and the varying developmental stages of teachers' TPACK knowledge in empirical research, particularly within qualitative research paradigms. This approach is exceptionally well-suited for the analysis of experiential teachers' instructional practices with technology (Niess, 2013), and is also apt for investigating educators' technological integration in teaching (Wei & Hu, 2020). Drawing from the foundations of the TPACK theory, this study investigates the information teaching capabilities of EAP instructors.

3. TPACK Elements Analysis of EAP Teachers in the Era of Digital Intelligence

Employing the TPACK framework, this study examines the content within the domestic literature pertaining to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) from five dimensions: the dominant concept of the integration of digital intelligence technology and EAP; teaching strategy and presentation mode; curriculum and teaching material knowledge; student knowledge; and evaluation knowledge, aiming to extract the TPACK elements of EAP teachers in the digital intelligence era.

3.1 *The Dominant Concept of Integration of Digital Intelligence Technology and EAP Teaching*

EAP courses inherently seek to enhance students' linguistic proficiency, academic competencies, and scholarly literacy. These courses, distinguished by their comprehensive content, information-rich nature, and academic rigor, demand an integration of digital intelligence technology to amplify teaching resources, extend the temporal and spatial dimensions of instruction, and address practical issues such as limited classroom hours. Furthermore, the integration of digital intelligence technology aims to instigate a paradigm shift towards "student-centered structural change" (Zheng, 2019). This approach facilitates multifaceted interactions among students leveraging digital technology, fostering a deeper engagement in the EAP learning process. It empowers students to independently explore and construct knowledge structures, master academic skills, and nurture scholarly literacy within a rich learning environment.

Simultaneously, integrating technology into course delivery to create a new EAP instructional environment characterized by a harmonious amalgamation of "normal online classroom, ubiquitous autonomous learning, and intelligent organization and management" (Kim et al., 2013). In addition to these overarching principles, EAP educators must select specific digital intelligence techniques aligned with their pedagogical objectives. For example, utilizing the robust corpus technology's search capabilities, EAP instructors should endeavor to integrate it into the curriculum to establish an independent, exploratory, and discovery-based learning platform, facilitating students' autonomous problem-solving (Chai et al., 2013).

3.2 Teaching Strategy and Presentation Form Knowledge of EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

In the context of advancing pedagogical models such as blended learning and the flipped classroom, educators must strategically allocate course content and learning objectives. EAP educators, in their pursuit of instruction integrated with digital intelligence technology, must emphasize classroom-based instruction while harnessing online platforms and mobile learning devices to guide students in their self-directed, open-ended acquisition of EAP knowledge and skills (Ye, 2020).

3.3 Knowledge of Courses and Teaching Materials in EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

In this era of digital intelligence, traditional EAP textbooks are increasingly supplemented with educators' self-compiled lecture materials and a diverse array of online resources. This shift reflects the transition from the narrow confines of printed textbooks to a broader perspective that encompasses an extensive array of educational resources. Centre to this transformation is the significant role played by digital resources, including online course platforms, mobile learning tools, QR codes, and other interactive mediums, which facilitate the presentation of multimodal resources. Consequently, this engenders a three-dimensional educational resource system that accommodates students' individualized requirements.

EAP instruction, in the digital intelligence age, places an emphasis on fostering student autonomy in the selection of instructional materials. Educators encourage students to contribute content related to the subject matter, thereby alleviating the limitations arising from the English teachers' specific disciplinary backgrounds. The ultimate objective is to facilitate a collaborative learning process wherein students and educators jointly engage in resource development and co-create course content (Zhang, 2019).

3.4 Student Knowledge in EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

Despite contemporary college students' familiarity with digital intelligence technology, the incorporation of digital technologies into the instructional landscape may still pose psychological and technical challenges. For instance, ubiquitous learning environments may overwhelm students with choices in managing learning resources and content. Additionally, the absence of interpersonal interactions and direct supervision in online settings can also reduce students' motivation to fulfill digital learning tasks.

To address these challenges, educators should provide timely support and strategic guidance on cognitive aspects, learning methodologies, collaborative practices, and other facets of online learning (Liu & Liu, 2020). Conversely, the implementation of intelligent teaching systems offers a means by which educators can gain insight into students' learning processes and needs with greater precision, diagnose their grasp of instructional material accurately, and subsequently tailor in-person teaching content and activity design to optimize the learning experience.

4. Research Methods

Due to the fact that TPACK has the characteristics of situational, implicit, and personalized teacher knowledge, making it difficult to perceive and present, as well as the complexity caused by the dynamic interaction of the three major elements of discipline, technology, and teaching methods, this study adopts the method of multiple case studies to conduct a detailed analysis of TPACK knowledge of EAP teachers.

The study involved 6 EAP teachers, referred to as T1 through T6, who were selected as participants. These educators possessed varying degrees of experience in leveraging technological tools to support their teaching endeavors, catering to college English learners hailing from diverse professional backgrounds. The courses they offered encompassed EAP listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Essential demographic information about the research participants is presented in Table 1.

The EAP courses scrutinized in this research predominantly fell into two categories: EAP listening and speaking, and EAP reading and writing. The listening and speaking courses concentrated on nurturing students' abilities in comprehending lectures, refine their abilities in academic presentations, and cultivating competencies in in-person academic discourse. Consequently, these courses featured a heightened emphasis on speaking and listening interactions, both inside and outside the classroom. This educational approach necessitated a greater level of student engagement, requiring active participation and a heightened initiative in oral communication. Conversely, reading and writing courses centered on more individualized learning, with educators relying more extensively on technology to deliver instructional materials and evaluate students' reading and writing assignments. Additionally, peer evaluations were periodically conducted within the context of these courses.

The primary data source encompassed semi-structured interviews with each teacher, each lasting approximately one hour. These interviews were complemented by classroom observations, lesson plans, and teaching reflection diaries. The design of the interview outline was rooted in Niess's TPACK framework, encompassing themes related to the evolution of the technology integration process, the current state of technology utilization in EAP instruction, the instructors' insights, dilemmas, challenges, expectations, and recommendations, among other pertinent aspects. In the ensuing phase of data analysis, the Nvivo 12 software was employed to initially code the data from each case, aligning with Niess's TPACK four-dimensional analytical framework. Subsequently, a comparative analysis between cases was conducted to extract salient themes relevant to the scope of this study.

Table 1. Basic Information of the Research Participants

Teacher	Gender	Degree	Length of Teaching	Type of courses	Students' majors
T1	Female	PhD	10	EAP reading & writing	Computer Science
T2	Female	Master	6	EAP listening & speaking	Power engineering
T3	Male	PhD	12	EAP listening & speaking	Physics and Mathematics
T4	Female	Master	9	EAP reading, listening & speaking	Communication Engineering
T5	Female	PhD Candidate	13	EAP listening & speaking	Finance
T6	Male	Master	15	EAP listening & speaking	Optoelectronic Information Engineering

5. Results

Following Niess's theoretical framework, the characteristics of TPACK among EAP teachers are examined and discussed across four distinct dimensions: the overall concept of integrating information technology with EAP teaching, the teaching strategy and presentation knowledge of EAP teaching integrated with information technology, the curriculum and material knowledge of EAP teaching integrated with information technology, and the student knowledge of EAP teaching integrated with information technology.

5.1 The Overall Concept of Integrating Information Technology with EAP Teaching

This dimension mainly examines teachers' views and understanding of the integration goals of information technology and disciplines, mainly answering questions such as whether to integrate information technology in subject teaching and what advantages information technology can bring to subject teaching. In this study, the interviewed teachers have both similarities and differences in their overall understanding of the integration of information technology and EAP teaching due to various complex internal and external factors. See Table 2.

In the context of integrating information technology within the realm of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction, educators widely concur on its indispensable role. Information technology is recognized for its pivotal contribution to EAP teaching, acknowledged for its ability to stimulate students' intrinsic interest in learning, capture and maintain their engagement within the classroom, help to clearly and effectively share teaching materials, enrich the collection of teaching materials and resources, and foster English language learning opportunities that far exceed the capabilities of conventional pedagogical techniques. Providing English learning opportunities that traditional teaching methods cannot match (such as convenient listening training and massive audiovisual and oral materials) and creating extracurricular teaching and communication platforms, are indispensable and important components of modern English teaching. However, teachers have also expressed that information technology should be in an auxiliary position in English teaching, with the main role of "assisting teachers in achieving classroom teaching design" (T6), and should not be overly dependent, otherwise it will "dominate" (T1), affecting teacher-student interaction and learning effectiveness.

While a consensus among educators prevails regarding the status and function of information technology within the domain of English instruction, there are significant variations in their approaches to its practical application. A prevailing sentiment among the majority of instructors indicates dissatisfaction with the existing circumstances,

thereby prompting proactive investigations into novel methodologies for integrating technology. For example, T2 compares himself to a constantly trying "novice" and strives to explore a computer-assisted teaching approach that both he and his students enjoy. T6 expresses that he is "a person who is particularly interested in electronic products" and "always wants to try and learn if there are new products and developments". Therefore, she is willing to invest time and energy in researching educational technology and thinking about how to integrate technology into English teaching. However, some teachers are satisfied with the basic use of technology and do not spend more time and energy pursuing teaching innovation through technology integration. For example, T3 believes that it is sufficient to use some basic techniques in EAP teaching, without being too flashy or pursuing breakthroughs, as foreign language teachers have "no professional background" and "technical bottlenecks determine that they cannot break through". In summary, as shown in relevant research (Schmidt et al., 2009), teachers have varying degrees of understanding and identification with the application of information technology in English teaching, reflecting the individuality and differences in the overall concept of integrating information technology with EAP teaching. This is closely related to factors such as teachers' time and energy, understanding and investment in teaching, interest and knowledge in technology, and the impact of teaching situations.

Table 2. Teachers' Reflection on Integration of Information Technology with EAP Teaching

Theme (References)	Nodes (References)	Data	Files	References
Integration of information technology in general (34)	Positive (17)	Stimulating students' learning	5	5
		Attracting students' attention	3	3
		Enriching and Enhancing teaching	5	6
		Creating extracurricular platforms	2	3
	Neutral/negative (17)	Auxiliary assistance to teaching	9	10
		Not be overly dependent	4	4
The role of information technology in teaching (30)	Positive (12)	Interested in electronic products	5	5
		Actively explore new technology	6	7
	Neutral /negative (18)	Satisfied with the use of technology	6	6
		Do not spend more time and energy pursuing teaching innovation	5	6
		language teachers have no technology background	2	2
		Technical bottlenecks cannot be broken through	3	4

5.2 Teaching Strategy and Presentation Form Knowledge of EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

This dimension mainly examines the teaching knowledge that teachers possess in using technology for teaching, namely, how to effectively use information technology in teaching and how to present teaching content. See Table 3.

The majority of teachers in this study perceive their grasp of information technology to be at the basic to intermediate level, with the exception of T6, who exhibits a slightly more advanced understanding of technology, owing to their consistent exploration of novel technological advancements. Nevertheless, as they age, they increasingly recognize their inability to keep pace with the cutting edge of technological progress. This observation underscores the relatively modest technical proficiency of foreign language educators, thereby exerting a consequential impact on their overall Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) competence (Tondeur et al., 2017).

Since the majority of the teachers interviewed did not undergo specialized technology training or engage in computer-assisted foreign language teaching programs, their proficiency in utilizing technology in EAP instruction remains rudimentary. Their primary objectives revolve around fulfilling fundamental teaching needs, such as internet-based information retrieval for pedagogical purposes, downloading and playing audio and video

materials, crafting PowerPoint presentations for instructional content delivery, and disseminating teaching resources through communication platforms such as QQ, WeChat, and email.

Notably, many educators, while employing technology for essential teaching tasks, exhibit a proactive inclination towards exploring innovative methods of technology integration, such as leveraging online teaching platforms and engaging in video production. Furthermore, some teachers venture into pioneering teaching approaches that seamlessly blend English, technology, and students' academic backgrounds. For instance, T2 assigns video production and EAP writing assignments to students majoring in computer science, while T3 tailors electronic reading materials to align with individual students' professional pursuits. However, it is apparent that only a small fraction of teaching activities truly embraces a deep integration of modern technology within the realm of EAP subject instruction. Instead, the prevalent practice tends to involve a superficial use of technology for rudimentary teaching functions, representing an enhancement and refinement of existing teaching models, rather than the formulation of a new instructional paradigm or a fundamental overhaul of the relationship between EAP teaching and information technology.

Table 3. Teaching Strategy and Presentation Form Knowledge of EAP Teachers

Theme (References)	Nodes (References)	Data	Files	References		
Teaching strategy and knowledge (39)	Used (31)	Using the internet to query teaching related information	9	9		
		Downloading and playing videos, audios	4	5		
		Creating PowerPoint presentations to present teaching contents	7	7		
		Sharing teaching materials through communication tools such as QQ, WeChat, and email	6	7		
		Using teaching platforms or networks	2	3		
	Explored (8)	Creating online teaching platforms	1	1		
		Video production	4	4		
		Providing content specific listening/reading materials	3	3		
		Attitude towards strategy and knowledge (22)	Positive (8)	Actively seeking and selecting resources suitable for one's own teaching	3	5
				Gradually expanding from basic functions to trying some complex educational technologies	3	3
Neutral /negative (14)	Primary to intermediate level of information knowledge and literacy		4	4		
	Hardly keeping up with the forefront of technological development	5	6			
	No systemic training	2	2			
	No strong and lasting external support	2	2			

By examining the historical progression of educators' involvement with information technology in EAP teaching, one can discern a gradual evolution of their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). This development unfolds from the initial utilization of pre-existing curriculum materials to the development of customized teaching courseware. It progresses from passive reliance on multimedia resources accompanying textbooks to the active pursuit and curation of resources aligned with local instructional contexts. This journey extends beyond rudimentary functions, such as employing online search engines and playing multimedia content,

to the experimentation with somewhat more intricate educational technologies, including online teaching platforms and video production.

Throughout this continuous process of exploration and experimentation, teachers continually enhance their ability to understand, manage, and assess information technology. This underscores that the development of TPACK knowledge among educators constitutes an ongoing, dynamic, and pragmatic long-term endeavor. Within the scope of this study, this development unfolds as a relatively isolated and gradual journey, predominantly reliant on teachers' independent exploration, insights, and collegial exchanges, without a substantial and enduring external support system.

5.3 Knowledge of Courses and Teaching Materials in EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

This dimension primarily assesses teachers' competence in the integration of information technology with EAP teaching and course materials. It encompasses aspects such as the influence of information technology on course objectives and content, as well as the identification of suitable technical resources for integration as course materials. Refer to Table 4 for further details.

Regarding curriculum objectives and content, teachers have, for the most part, augmented and supplemented the existing textual information, video, and audio resources in line with the prescribed curriculum outline and textbook content. This enrichment serves to broaden the original curriculum's scope. However, it's worth noting that the introduction of information technology has not resulted in significant alterations or comprehensive reforms to the core curriculum.

In terms of course materials, teachers have exhibited a relatively confined and uniform utilization of information technology. This usage primarily encompasses digital textbooks, multimedia resources, and online platforms. In addition, some teachers, such as T1 and T2, have ventured into employing foreign online teaching platforms, while T5 has even encouraged students to create basic online communication spaces. Nevertheless, due to divergences in cognitive capabilities between teachers and students, as well as practical constraints such as technical equipment, the efficacy of these endeavors has not reached its full potential.

This observation highlights that teachers may encounter several challenges when attempting to integrate relatively sophisticated educational technologies with traditional teaching resources. Resolving this issue necessitates increased personal commitment from educators, as well as increased external support. During the interviews, many teachers voiced apprehensions about an overreliance on electronic materials and online platforms supplied by textbooks. It is evident that when harnessing modern technology to enhance course content and materials, teachers must possess a discerning understanding of its proper use. This awareness is vital in order to prevent the unintentional substitution of traditional textbook-based instruction with new technological methods, thus forfeiting the advantages that information technology can offer to EAP teaching.

Table 4. Knowledge of Courses and Teaching Materials of EAP Teachers

Theme (References)	Nodes (References)	Data	Files	References
Knowledge of course and teaching materials (28)	Familiar (14)	Slightly expanded and supplemented relevant text information and video and audio resources	5	5
		Digital textbooks	3	3
		Multimedia resources	3	4
		Teaching platforms/networks	2	2
	Unfamiliar (14)	Not significantly adjusting or reforming the original curriculum	9	10
		Using foreign online teaching platforms	2	2
		Designing and building simple online communication spaces	2	2

5.4 Student Knowledge in EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

This dimension primarily evaluates teachers' comprehension of the extent to which information technology can enhance students' grasp and acquisition of subject matter. This includes aspects like the intricacies of student learning within a technological setting, potential misconceptions, and challenges they may encounter. For detailed insights, please refer to Table 5.

This study has revealed that the component of TPACK knowledge related to students constitutes the weakest facet within the surveyed teachers' TPACK knowledge framework. A predominant focus among most educators is on how to utilize technology as a tool for teaching, emphasizing the "teaching" aspect, rather than guiding students in "learning" with technology. There is a notable absence of comprehensive encouragement and guidance for students to harness modern technology for self-directed learning outside of class. Furthermore, teachers generally exhibit a limited familiarity with the current landscape, distinctive attributes, and potential challenges students may encounter when using modern technology for English learning.

For instance, T1 concedes that they possess no understanding of the information technologies available to students for English learning. T3 holds the belief that even if they were to provide this information to students, it would not motivate them to independently employ these technologies for learning after class. Hence, T3 refrains from imparting such information during teaching. Other teachers, when occasionally mentioning certain English learning resources like language learning websites or oral listening practice software, do not consistently regard guiding and supervising students in the use of technology for English learning as a prominent component of the English curriculum throughout the teaching process.

Furthermore, teachers often lack familiarity with students' attitudes and learning preferences when it comes to information technology. One of the significant reasons why some teachers fell short of achieving the expected outcomes while experimenting with the previously mentioned online teaching platforms is their failure to anticipate the potential challenges students might encounter during the utilization of these platforms. This includes an understanding of students' learning habits and technical preferences.

For instance, when T2 introduced students to a foreign online teaching platform, they observed that students experienced notable anxiety, primarily arising from technical issues such as difficulties in internet access and the successful submission of homework. As a result, students did not actively engage in English discussions on the teaching website, as initially anticipated by the teacher. T2 believes that the primary issue resides in the fact that "students may prefer to engage in activities they personally enjoy after class, rather than those mandated by the teacher."

In essence, several teachers who ventured into the realm of online teaching platforms discovered that their initial objectives were not fully realized due to an inadequate understanding of their students' needs and preferences. Encouraging students to genuinely embrace the educational technology environment chosen by teachers requires more comprehensive guidance and thoughtful design.

The research findings concerning student knowledge suggest that it may represent a relatively underdeveloped and overlooked aspect within the teacher's TPACK knowledge framework. It is imperative that future teacher education and training give due attention to the dimension related to students in the teacher's TPACK, thus ensuring the holistic advancement of the teacher's TPACK knowledge structure.

Table 5. Student Knowledge in EAP Teaching Integrated with Digital Intelligence Technology

Theme (References)	Nodes (References)	Data	Files	References
Reasons for lack of student knowledge (39)	Lack of awareness of guiding students to learn with technology (31)	Few guidance to students to use modern technology for autonomous learning	4	4
		Not familiar with the difficulties of students using modern technology	3	3
		no understanding of the information technologies that students can use in EAP learning	3	4
	Unfamiliar with students' attitudes and learning preferences towards information technology (10)	Attaching no importance to students' use of technology for learning	6	7
		Underestimate students' reluctance	4	4
		Unaware of students' learning habits	4	4
		Unaware of students' technical preferences	3	3
Students preference to learn things they like to do after class	1	1		

6. Discussion

This study carries specific implications for the education and professional growth of EAP teachers in the context of the information technology environment.

6.1 Improve EAP Teacher Education and Training Courses

Emphasizing the content of TPACK within subject teaching methods is vital to facilitate teachers' proficiency in integrating information technology with EAP teaching. This entails the mastery of methods and strategies encompassing EAP classroom design that incorporates technology, the adoption of multimodal teaching approaches, utilization of online teaching platforms, establishment of comprehensive teaching resource repositories, and the ability to search and evaluate information resources. Furthermore, it involves proficiency in utilizing EAP teaching software and network resources, among other components. Throughout this process, it becomes imperative to refine various dimensions of TPACK knowledge, ensuring that teachers attain a correct and comprehensive understanding of its essence. This equips them with the capability to effectively employ modern technology in conducting EAP teaching encompassing knowledge and skills, cross-cultural communication, and other essential aspects of the curriculum.

6.2 Cultivate Foreign Language Teachers' Awareness of Independent Professional Development and Stimulate EAP Teachers' Enthusiasm for Technology Integration and Teaching Innovation

This study has revealed that the incorporation of information technology into EAP teaching is typically a spontaneous, individual choice made by teachers, largely devoid of support from external evaluation systems and incentive mechanisms. Consequently, teachers' willingness to invest time and effort in delving into TPACK theory and practice depends greatly on their awareness of professional development and career aspirations. In light of this, guiding teachers to gain a comprehensive appreciation of the benefits associated with integrating technology into EAP teaching, enhancing their self-efficacy in technology integration, and igniting their enthusiasm for pursuing teaching excellence through technology integration represent intrinsic factors that can stimulate the development of TPACK among EAP educators.

6.3 Construct an EAP Teacher Professional Learning Community to Promote Communication and Sharing of TPACK

TPACK represents an emerging and highly pertinent area of focus within education and pedagogy, characterized by its intricate theoretical and practical dimensions. Establishing a teacher-learning community geared towards facilitating information exchange and resource sharing proves instrumental in harnessing collective knowledge and resources to tackle the challenges and issues individual educators may confront during practical exploration.

Simultaneously, initiatives like demonstration and observation classes, as well as collaborative research projects, play a pivotal role in fostering the advancement of TPACK across all community members. These activities serve as effective mechanisms to propel the development of TPACK among EAP teachers, ultimately benefiting both the teachers and their students.

6.4 Establish a Guarantee Mechanism for the Development of TPACK for EAP Teachers

Teachers' information technology knowledge is often relatively weak, and strong and sustained educational technology support is a strong guarantee to help EAP teachers achieve technological integration. Specifically, it includes establishing teaching service institutions, strengthening cooperation between foreign language teachers and educational technology departments, organizing educational technology exchanges and learning activities, and institutionalizing regular support and guarantees are powerful external conditions to ensure the continuous and in-depth development of TPACK for EAP teachers.

6.5 Limitations

The limitations of this study can be delineated as follows. Firstly, it is important to note that this research primarily falls within the realm of foundational and theoretical exploration, thus, it may not offer a comprehensive portrayal or practical analysis of factors related to the competence of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers. Moreover, the scope of the questionnaires employed in this study might not encompass all relevant facets of the subject matter. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the sample of participants in the survey may not be entirely representative, and the selection of universities and colleges could be more refined. Finally, this study does not delve into recognizing and addressing the distinctions between various types of EAP courses, such as listening and speaking versus reading and writing courses. It is crucial to recognize the significance of these distinctions in optimizing the integration of technology for each specific context. The broader implications of this study should be tailored to suit the unique requirements of these different EAP courses, ultimately promoting improved EAP education within an information technology environment.

7. Conclusion

Within the current global landscape marked by the dynamic evolution of educational technology, the profound integration of information technology and curricula has become an unavoidable trend in the development of EAP curriculum. Furthermore, it constitutes a significant focus in the ongoing reform of foreign language teaching in Chinese universities. In this context, teachers play a crucial role in these educational transformations, as only educators equipped with the requisite knowledge and innovative pedagogical concepts can effectively achieve the ultimate objectives of teaching reform. Consequently, the enhancement of TPACK among EAP teachers carries significant practical implications for advancing the deep-rooted assimilation of information technology and curricula. Commencing with an exploration of the TPACK of frontline EAP educators, this study delineates the key characteristics of TPACK exhibited by these teachers and offers corresponding strategies for their development. The research findings hold promising prospects for nurturing the professional growth of EAP teachers in the digital age while promoting the comprehensive integration of information technology into EAP course instruction.

Acknowledgments

This research received funding from the Project of World Language and Culture (WYZL2022SH0012) of the China Center for Language Planning and Policy Studies.

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Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI): Chat GPT for Effective English Language Learning among Thai Students

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Received: October 12, 2023

Accepted: October 29, 2023

Online Published: October 30, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p68

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p68>

Abstract

The study aimed to 1) explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) models like Chat GPT to facilitate English language learning among Thai students and 2) compare the English language learning effectiveness among Thai students after implementing artificial intelligence (AI) like Chat GPT to facilitate English language learning.

The participants involved Thai students aged 19-20 from first-year pre-service teachers in Bangkok. 120 students participated, 60 in the control and 60 in the experimental group. The selection of participants was done through stratified random sampling to ensure a diverse representation of pre-service teachers with varying levels of English proficiency. They utilized a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative and quantitative data: Standardized English tests, Chat GPT, focus group interviews, and field notes. The research findings strongly advocated integrating AI tools like Chat GPT in educational settings to facilitate more effective language learning. The study demonstrates that students who interacted with AI significantly improved their language skills. A paired t-test revealed that this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Feedback from the focus group interviews indicated that students in the experimental group, after implementing artificial intelligence (AI) like Chat GPT, found the AI-based learning experience more engaging and personalized. They reported that the real-time feedback and interactive exercises offered by Chat GPT helped them understand and apply language concepts more effectively. Lastly, the attitude changes because the students had high motivation, strong self-confidence, and a positive attitude shift.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), effective English language learning, Chat GPT, Thai students

1. Introduction

English has become vital for international communication and business in today's globalized world. English proficiency is an academic necessity for Thai students and a crucial ability that can open the door to countless future chances. However, traditional techniques of language training, which frequently rely on memorization by rote and repetitive exercises, are less efficient at engaging pupils and offering a tailored learning experience. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potent tool in various industries, altering how jobs are accomplished and issues are solved. Recently, there has been a growing interest in utilizing AI technologies for educational applications, specifically language learning. This study investigates the potential for AI to boost Thai students' English language learning. Using AI-based platforms and applications tailored to their requirements and interests, students can engage in personalized and interactive learning. This study examines the benefits of artificial intelligence in English language learning, discusses the problems that need to be solved, and recommends appropriately incorporating AI into the Thai education system.

The capacity to create tailored learning experiences is one of the most significant benefits of using AI in English language learning. Individual student strengths, limitations, and learning styles can be analyzed using AI-powered platforms, allowing customized content and exercises. According to a study by Wang and Chen (2018), AI algorithms may adjust the level of difficulty of exercises based on a student's performance, ensuring that they are

appropriately pushed without being overwhelmed. By focusing on specific growth areas and delivering tailored feedback, this individualized method can dramatically increase language learning efficiency.

In addition to personalization, the dynamic and engaging character of AI facilitates English language learning. Traditional language acquisition methods rely on textbooks and lectures, which may only partially engage and fascinate students. However, AI-based systems can incorporate gamification elements such as quizzes, interactive exercises, and virtual chats to make learning more engaging and motivating. According to a study by Suleman et al. (2019), students who used AI-based language learning platforms reported higher levels of engagement and motivation than those who used conventional methods.

When integrating AI into English language education in Thailand, various obstacles must be overcome despite the potential benefits. One of the most significant problems is ensuring that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, have equitable access to AI technologies. AI platforms frequently necessitate internet connectivity and gadgets, which some students, especially those from underprivileged regions, may need easier access. According to Rovai et al. (2020), policymakers and educational institutions must invest in infrastructure and resources to overcome the digital divide and offer fair access to AI-based language learning tools. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom offers many advantages, including customized learning experiences for each student. Using AI algorithms, intelligent tutoring systems can adjust and meet each learner's specific demands, improving comprehension and memory retention. AI is used in adaptive assessments to evaluate students' performance, giving them immediate feedback and pinpointing areas for development.

Several recommendations can be proposed to leverage AI for English language learning in Thailand effectively. First, teacher training programs should be developed to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate AI into their teaching practices effectively. This will ensure teachers can guide and support students utilizing AI tools to maximize their learning outcomes. Additionally, a collaboration between educational institutions, AI developers, and language experts is crucial in designing and developing AI platforms that are culturally sensitive and aligned with the Thai curriculum. By working together, universities can create AI-based solutions that cater to Thai students' specific needs and context, enhancing their English language learning experience.

However, before exploring the possible advantages of AI in English language learning, it is crucial to undertake a gap analysis to pinpoint the current flaws in the language learning methodologies in Thailand. Thai students frequently require assistance in understanding the language despite efforts to increase their English language ability. Traditional approaches like lectures and textbooks must be upgraded to provide individualized and exciting learning experiences. These methods may need to be revised to effectively address each student's unique learning needs and preferences, which could lead to less-than-ideal learning outcomes.

Additionally, a lack of interactive and exciting language learning activities might hinder students' motivation and interest. The gap in the existing language learning strategies emphasizes the demand for novel techniques to overcome these constraints and offer Thai students a more effective and exciting learning environment.

This study seeks to close the gaps in Thailand's language-learning strategies by completing a gap analysis. AI technology can close these gaps by providing interactive learning experiences tailored to each student's requirements and interests. By including AI-based platforms and applications, learning activities, gamification features, and virtual discussions can be provided to motivate and enliven students' learning. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom offers many advantages, including customized learning experiences for each student. Using AI algorithms, intelligent tutoring systems can adjust and meet each learner's specific demands, improving comprehension and memory retention. AI is used in adaptive assessments to evaluate students' performance, giving them immediate feedback and pinpointing areas for development (Ideal Asarsh, 2023).

This study aims to fill the holes in Thailand's language-learning methodologies by performing a gap analysis. AI technology can close these gaps by offering interactive learning opportunities customized to each student's needs and interests. Learning activities, gamification elements, and virtual dialogues can be offered to stimulate and animate students' learning by incorporating AI-based platforms and applications.

The gap analysis highlights the shortcomings of conventional language learning methods in Thailand and the demand for creative solutions (Balaji & Chakravarthy, 2019). LinkedIn (2023) claimed the technological sector has advanced significantly in recent years, and education is one area where this is most noticeable. Students now have more excellent options than ever to customize their learning experiences to meet their unique needs, thanks to the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and personalized learning.

The way students study is being revolutionized by AI-driven individualized learning. Personalized learning can produce more tailored learning routes for students by utilizing AI technology, leading to more effective and efficient learning. By assessing each student's unique needs and customizing the materials and activities to suit their interests, artificial intelligence (AI), technology can assist in making learning more personalized. Students may receive individualized content based on their skills, interests, and learning preferences, for instance, through AI-driven personalized learning.

Moreover, compared to conventional approaches, AI-driven individualized learning can offer pupils more feedback and direction. AI can identify the areas in which pupils are having difficulty and offer focused comments to help them improve. AI is also capable of making activity and resource recommendations that are specific to each student's needs. As they continue learning, this keeps pupils interested and involved.

AI technologies can close these gaps and improve Thai students' English language acquisition. The remainder of this essay will expand on the advantages of AI in language acquisition, go over the issues that must be resolved, and offer suggestions for successfully incorporating AI into the Thai educational system. Therefore, the researcher wishes to consider the gap analysis to explore the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in English language learning.

2. Research Objectives

(1) To investigate the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) like Chat GPT to facilitate English language learning among Thai students.

(2) To compare the effectiveness of English Language Learning among Thai Students after implementing artificial intelligence (AI): Chat GPT to facilitate English language learning.

2.1 Traditional Methods of Language Learning

Traditional language learning methods in Thailand often rely on rote memorization and repetitive exercises. These methods, while straightforward, may not cater to individual learning styles or provide opportunities for real-world language application. The lack of personalization and interactive engagement can result in reduced motivation and less effective learning outcomes. Traditional language learning methods have long been foundational to acquiring proficiency in a new language. These methods have evolved, formed the basis of language education, and been widely used in various educational settings. Here is an explanation of each method :

(1) Grammar-Translation Method

The grammar-translation method emphasizes the study of grammatical rules and translating texts between the target language and the native language. It focuses on understanding the structure and rules of the language through reading and writing (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

(2) Direct Method

The Direct Method stresses the direct interaction with the target language without using the native language. It focuses on oral communication, emphasizing conversation and practical language use (Berlitz & Haupth, 1946).

(3) Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method centers on habit formation and repetition, often involving intense drilling of language patterns. It heavily relies on oral and aural skills and minimizes the use of the written form (Lado, 1964).

(4) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching prioritizes honest communication and interaction. It encourages students to engage in meaningful conversations, problem-solving, and context-based language use (Littlewood, (2014).

(5) Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response is based on the idea that language learning is facilitated by involving physical actions and responses. Students respond to commands in the target language to understand and internalize language patterns (Asher, 1969).

These traditional language learning methods have contributed to the rich language education landscape and continue to influence language teaching practices worldwide. You can explore these methods further through the provided references and citations.

2.2 AI in Education

In education, this technology will influence how students learn, teachers work, and ultimately, how people structure the education system. Some educators and leaders look forward to these changes with great enthusiasm.

Sal Kahn, founder of Khan Academy, went so far as to say in a TED talk that AI has the potential to effect “probably the biggest positive transformation that education has ever seen.” However, others warn that AI will spread misinformation, facilitate cheating in school and college, kill whatever vestiges of individual privacy remain, and cause massive job loss. The challenge is to harness the positive potential while avoiding or mitigating the harm. In May 2023, the U.S. Department of Education released a report titled *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations*. The department conducted listening sessions 2022 with more than 700 people, including educators and parents, to gauge their views on AI. The report noted, “Constituents believe that action is required now to get ahead of the expected increase of AI in education technology—and they want to roll up their sleeves and start working together.” People expressed anxiety about “future potential risks” with AI but felt that “AI may enable achieving educational priorities in better ways, at scale, and with lower costs” (Education Next, 2023). The use of AI: ChatGPT, a powerful natural language processing model, in the field of education, has several significant implications:

Enhancing Learning Motivation: Research by Zhou Li (2023) demonstrates that ChatGPT can positively impact students' learning motivation. ChatGPT can foster high motivation, strong self-confidence, and a positive attitude shift among students when integrated into the educational environment. This can be attributed to its ability to provide personalized and interactive support, making learning more engaging and enjoyable.

Improved Writing and Reading Skills: ChatGPT has been found to enhance students' reading and writing abilities generally. It can provide instant feedback, suggest improvements, and help students develop their language skills. This benefit aligns with Ali, Shamsan, Hezam, and Mohammed's (2023) findings, indicating that ChatGPT encourages students to improve their written communication skills.

Support for learning English: In the context of language learning, students' desire to learn and their belief in having readily available support is crucial. ChatGPT can be a helpful tool for language learners, offering instant translations, language practice, and conversation partners. The positive attitude shift observed in the study by Zhou Li (2023) highlights the potential of ChatGPT in fostering a supportive and motivating environment for language education.

Enhanced Teaching Practices: ChatGPT in the classroom can encourage more motivated teaching. Educators can leverage ChatGPT to provide personalized assistance to students, offer explanations, and facilitate interactive discussions. This can create a more engaging and dynamic learning experience, aligning with contemporary pedagogical approaches emphasizing learner-centered instruction.

Areas for Further Research: While ChatGPT shows promise in various aspects of education, there is still room for more in-depth research. Some areas that require further exploration include the impact of ChatGPT on speaking and listening skills, the potential drawbacks or limitations of ChatGPT in educational settings, and strategies for effectively integrating ChatGPT into the curriculum.

In summary, ChatGPT has the potential to revolutionize education by improving learning motivation, enhancing writing and reading skills, and supporting language learning. Its use in the classroom can create a more engaging and interactive learning environment, benefiting students and educators. However, continued research and experimentation are necessary to understand the implications and challenges of fully integrating ChatGPT into education. While AI can significantly enhance the process of second language acquisition, it is essential to note that it should complement, not replace, human instructors and real-life language practice. AI can provide valuable support and resources, but meaningful communication and cultural understanding often require human interaction. The correlation between AI and SLA is evolving, with technology playing an increasingly prominent role in language education.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 SLA Theories

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, particularly the input hypothesis and the interaction hypothesis. These theories posit that language learning is most effective when learners are exposed to “comprehensible input” and have opportunities for interactive communication. In other words, learners benefit slightly from language input above their current level of understanding and from interactive experiences that allow them to negotiate meaning.

3.2 AI and SLA

AI tools like Chat GPT align well with these SLA theories. They can provide comprehensible input tailored to the learner's current level of language proficiency and offer interactive experiences that simulate real-world language

use. This alignment suggests that AI tools can effectively facilitate language learning and deliver personalized, interactive, and contextually relevant language experiences.

Table 1 should comprehensively compare AI and SLA theories, highlighting how they can complement each other in the context of language learning.

Aspect	Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Second Language Acquisition (SLA)	Complementarity	Citation & References
Objective	To create intelligent systems capable of performing tasks that would require human intelligence.	To understand how people acquire a second language.	AI can be designed to align with SLA theories to facilitate effective language learning.	(Smith & Johnson, 2015; Lee & Kim, 2020)
Methodology	Algorithms, machine learning, natural language processing.	Observational and experimental studies on language learners.	AI can use SLA research to create more effective language learning algorithms.	(Williams, 2018; Davis, 2016)
Personalization	High; AI can tailor learning experiences to individual needs.	Varies; SLA theories acknowledge the importance of individual differences but may not offer solutions.	AI can provide the personalized learning experiences that SLA theories recommend.	(Roberts & Jones, 2019; Thomas et al., 2017)
Interactivity	Can offer interactive learning experiences through chatbots, virtual environments, etc.	Emphasizes the importance of interaction in language learning.	AI can provide the interactive experiences that are crucial in SLA.	(Kim & Park, 2021; Martin & White, 2019)
Real-time feedback	Provides immediate feedback based on learner input.	Feedback is considered crucial but depends on the teacher or environment.	AI can offer the immediate, consistent feedback that is beneficial according to SLA theories.	(Smith & Davis, 2021; Brown & Green, 2017)
Scalability	Highly scalable; can serve many learners simultaneously.	Limited by classroom size and teacher availability.	AI can extend the reach of effective SLA-based teaching methods to more learners.	(Johnson & Lee, 2020; Williams & Clark, 2018)

Table 1. Comparing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories can provide a concise overview of their similarities and differences and how they can complement each other in language learning.

Related Studies

As elucidated in this study, the implications of leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for effective English language learning among Thai students resonate with a growing body of research exploring AI's integration into language education. Several studies have delved into the transformative potential of AI-driven language learning, providing valuable insights and supporting the assertions made in this thesis.

The effectiveness of AI-driven language-learning platforms is a significant field of related study. Smith et al. (2019) did a study that confirms the present study's quantitative findings. Students who interacted with an AI-based language-learning platform considerably increased their language skills. Their research supports the notion that AI can improve language learning outcomes.

The influence of AI on personalized learning experiences presented in this thesis is consistent with Roberts and Jones's study (2019). They investigated the concept of personalized learning in the context of AI. They discovered that AI-driven systems may modify material and pace to meet the specific requirements of each learner. Individualization is a crucial component of the personalized approach observed in the experimental group of this study, as evidenced by the high levels of engagement and personalization stated by participants (Thomas et al., 2017).

Regarding real-time feedback, the present study resonates with the research of Smith and Davis (2021); they emphasized the importance of timely and relevant feedback in language learning, which was a significant attribute of Chat GPT in this research. The immediate feedback AI provides contributes to understanding and applying language concepts, as observed in this study.

The alignment between AI-driven language learning and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, a core aspect of this thesis, has also been explored in previous research. Williams & Clark (2018) and Lee and Kim (2020) revealed the harmony between AI-based language learning methods and SLA principles. They found that AI systems can facilitate the comprehensible input and interaction aspects, central tenets of SLA theories.

The global importance of English proficiency, as emphasized in the implications for education, is supported by the extensive body of research on the value of English as a global lingua franca. Johnson & Lee (2020) addressed the role of technology in language learning and noted that English proficiency significantly enhances individuals' opportunities in global contexts. The findings of this thesis, promoting AI-assisted language learning, align with this global perspective.

Ali, Shamsan, Hezam, and Mohammed (2023) revealed that most human actions, including learning a foreign language, are driven by motivation, which is influenced by inner and extrinsic variables. This study looked into the effects of ChatGPT on English language learning. Data from 80 teachers and students who had access to the ChatGPT in its infancy in early 2023 were gathered using a quantitative research design. The sample, which was chosen using a non-probability sampling technique, answered an online survey. Findings demonstrated that ChatGPT generally inspires students to improve their reading and writing abilities. The respondents' opinions on ChatGPT's impact on improving speaking and listening abilities were neutral.

The results imply that ChatGPT-based instruction is inspiring. Instead of fearing ChatGPT's adverse effects, which necessitate further in-depth examinations, it should be embraced as a learning tool.

In conclusion, the research presented in this thesis finds support and resonance in existing studies highlighting AI's transformative potential in language education. These related studies provide evidence and validation for the assertions made in this thesis, underlining the significance of integrating AI tools for effective language learning among Thai students.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The study involved Thai students aged 19-20 from the first-year pre-service teacher in Bangkok. 120 students participated, 60 in the control and 60 in the experimental group. The selection of participants was done through stratified random sampling to ensure a diverse representation of pre-service teachers with varying levels of English proficiency.

4.2 Research Design

The research employed a quasi-experimental design featuring pre-tests and post-tests administered to the control and experimental groups. The control group continued with their regular English curriculum, while the experimental group interacted with Chat GPT for 30 minutes daily over eight weeks. This design allowed for a direct comparison of the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods versus AI-assisted learning.

4.3 Research Tools

4.3.1 Standardized English Tests

Standardized English tests were administered before and after the intervention to assess the participants' language skills. These tests evaluated vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and conversational fluency.

4.3.2 Chat GPT

The experimental group interacted with Chat GPT, a conversational AI model developed by OpenAI. The platform was accessed via computers and mobile devices, allowing for a flexible learning environment.

4.3.3 Focus Group Interviews and Field Notes

The qualitative data were collected through focus group interviews and field notes. These interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants from the control and experimental groups to gather insights into their learning experiences. The field notes are used to observe the student's performance in the actual classroom.

4.3.4 SPSS Software

Statistical analysis of the quantitative data was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This included t-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores and ANOVA to analyze the variance between the control and experimental groups.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Standardized English tests were used for the pre-tests and post-tests to assess language skills objectively. Additionally, focus group interviews and field notes were conducted using content analysis to gather qualitative insights into the students' learning experiences. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software to evaluate the significance of the observed improvements.

5. Results

5.1 Quantitative Findings

5.1.1 Standardized English Tests

The experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in their English language skills compared to the control group (Smith et al., 2019). The average post-test score for the experimental group was 85%, compared to 70% for the control group (Johnson & Lee, 2020). A paired t-test revealed that this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Williams, 2018).

Table 2. Statistical Test Results

Statistical Test	Result
Paired t-test	$p < 0.05$

The paired t-test (Table 2) revealed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Considering each skill presented below as follows:

- (1) Vocabulary: The average score of the experimental group increased from 60% to 80% (Brown & Green, 2017).
- (2) Grammar: The average score rose from 65% to 85% (Davis, 2016).
- (3) Reading Comprehension: An increase from 70% to 88% was observed (Martin & White, 2019).
- (4) Conversational Fluency: The average score was 55% to 78% (Kim & Park, 2021).

5.1.2 SPSS Analysis

The SPSS software was used to perform an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which confirmed that the improvements in the experimental group were statistically significant across all areas tested ($F(1, 98) = 32.5, p < 0.001$) (Smith & Johnson, 2015).

5.2 Qualitative Findings

5.2.1 Focus Group Interviews

Feedback from the focus group interviews indicated that students in the experimental group found the AI-based learning experience more engaging and personalized (Williams & Clark, 2018). They reported that the real-time feedback and interactive exercises offered by Chat GPT helped them understand and apply language concepts more effectively (Lee & Kim, 2020). The interview issues revealed as follows:

- (1) Engagement: 90% of the students reported higher engagement levels (Thomas et al., 2017).
- (2) Personalization: 85% felt the learning experience was tailored to their needs (Roberts & Jones, 2019).
- (3) Real-time Feedback: 95% found the immediate feedback helpful for their learning (Smith & Davis, 2021).

5.3 Field Notes Finding

The observation in the actual classroom situation for the experimental group using field notes found that the students had high motivation, strong confidence, and a positive attitude change. They were eager to learn the English language. They felt they had assistants who they could ask some questions all the time. Students can feel at ease asking chatbot queries and receiving assistance because they will not be judged (Yadav et al., 2022).

This finding was related to Ali, Shamsan, Hezam, and Mohammed (2023), who showed that ChatGPT generally motivates learners to develop reading and writing skills. The respondents had neutral attitudes towards the effect of

ChatGPT on developing listening and speaking skills. The findings suggest that ChatGPT-based teaching is motivational. ChatGPT should be used as a learning tool instead of fearing its negative impacts, which require further detailed investigations.

5.4 Interpretation

The quantitative and qualitative results corroborate, indicating a significant positive impact of using AI tools like Chat GPT for English language learning among Thai students (Williams & Clark, 2018; Lee & Kim, 2020).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study present a compelling case for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, exemplified by Chat GPT, into English language learning curricula among Thai students. As interpreted in the discussion, the results underscore the significant and positive impact of AI-assisted learning on language proficiency.

Quantitative data, particularly the outcomes of standardized English tests, demonstrate that the experimental group, which engaged with Chat GPT, exhibited a remarkable improvement in their English language skills compared to the control group. The post-test scores were significantly higher in the experimental group, with a clear statistical difference established through the paired t-test ($p < 0.05$). These results are consistent with prior research by Smith et al. (2019), Johnson & Lee (2020), and Williams (2018), affirming that AI tools can be instrumental in language acquisition.

The statistical analyses, including the paired t-test and the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) conducted using SPSS software, further validate the quantitative findings. The ANOVA results emphasized the statistical significance of improvements across various language dimensions, supporting the research of Smith & Johnson (2015). The qualitative findings, derived from focus group interviews, echoed the same sentiment, with students from the experimental group reporting higher engagement levels, personalization, and the benefit of real-time feedback. These experiences align well with established Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, such as the Input Hypothesis and the Interaction Hypothesis.

These combined quantitative and qualitative results signify a significant positive impact of AI tools like Chat GPT on English language learning among Thai students. The real-time feedback and personalized learning exercises offered by AI contribute to these improvements and create a more engaging and effective learning environment consistent with the pedagogical principles outlined in SLA theories.

The educational consequences are substantial. Given the global significance of English proficiency, this study strongly supports incorporating AI tools into language learning courses in Thailand. AI-driven language learning that is personalized, interactive, and real-time caters to individual learning needs and facilitates efficient language acquisition. This integration must be addressed with care to ensure that it supports traditional teaching approaches and enhances the language-learning experience.

In addition, this study's findings extend beyond Thailand and provide a paradigm for other regions attempting to modernize language teaching. Methods of AI-assisted learning bridge the gap between theory and practice in language instruction, potentially revolutionizing language education worldwide.

In conclusion, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) tools like Chat GPT into language learning programs can improve language proficiency and deliver more engaging and individualized learning experiences. These findings urge educational policymakers and institutions to explore the promising role of AI in the future of language teaching, ensuring that students can thrive in a world that is becoming increasingly linked. Lastly, the impact of ChatGPT on learning motivation among university students found that students who used ChatGPT exhibited high motivation, self-confidence, and a positive attitude shift. They were enthusiastic about learning English and believed they had accessible support.

7. Discussion

7.1 Interpretation of Results

The results of this study offer compelling evidence that supports the initial hypothesis, indicating that integrating AI tools, such as Chat GPT, can significantly enhance Thai students' English language. This interpretation is grounded in both quantitative and qualitative findings, which are consistent and mutually reinforcing.

Quantitatively, the experimental group that engaged with Chat GPT demonstrated a remarkable improvement in their English language skills compared to the control group. The average post-test score for the experimental group was significantly higher at 85% compared to the control group's 70%. This difference was confirmed to be statistically significant through a paired t-test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. These findings echo the

research of Smith et al. (2019), Johnson & Lee (2020), and Williams (2018), which highlight the efficacy of AI-driven language learning.

Table 2 shows the statistical test results, emphasizing the significance of the paired t-test in demonstrating the impact of AI-assisted learning. The improvements were consistent across various language skills. Vocabulary scores increased from 60% to 80%, aligning with the work of Brown Green (2017). Grammar skills improved from 65% to 85%, in line with the research by Davis (2016). Reading comprehension increased from 70% to 88%, consistent with findings by Martin & White (2019). Conversational fluency improved from an average score of 55% to 78%, supporting research conducted by Kim & Park (2021).

The SPSS analysis further substantiates the quantitative findings by conducting an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results of the ANOVA, with an $F(1, 98)$ value of 32.5 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$, confirm the statistical significance of the improvements observed in the experimental group. This statistical analysis corresponds with the work of Smith & Johnson (2015), providing a robust basis for the impact of AI tools on language learning.

Qualitatively, feedback from focus group interviews strengthens the interpretation of results. Students in the experimental group reported that the AI-based learning experience was more engaging and personalized, aligning with the research of Williams Clark (2018) and Lee and Kim (2020). The real-time feedback and interactive exercises offered by Chat GPT were highlighted as factors that significantly enhanced students' understanding and application of language concepts. These findings align with the principles of SLA theories, such as the input and interaction hypotheses, which underscore the importance of comprehensible input and interaction in language learning.

7.2 Implications for Education

The implications of this study extend beyond the immediate research context and carry significant weight for educational policy and curriculum design, particularly in Thailand. These findings strongly advocate for integrating AI tools, such as Chat GPT, into language learning curricula in the country.

English proficiency is paramount in the globalized world, and traditional language teaching methods often fail to provide engaging and compelling learning experiences. The personalized and real-time nature of AI-driven language learning, as evidenced by this study, aligns closely with SLA theories. The personalization caters to individual learning styles and paces, which SLA research has long recommended.

Moreover, the real-time feedback provided by Chat GPT addresses a critical aspect of language learning highlighted in SLA literature. Immediate and relevant feedback is recognized as a critical factor in language acquisition. Thus, the AI's capacity to offer real-time feedback enhances students' understanding and application of language concepts, resulting in more effective learning outcomes.

Educators in Thailand can bridge the gap between theory and practice in language instruction by incorporating AI-assisted language learning methods into the curriculum. This integration should be carefully considered, ensuring that AI complements traditional teaching methods and enriches the language learning experience.

Furthermore, these findings are broader than those of the Thai context. They can serve as a model for other regions seeking to enhance language education using AI tools. They are related to Shaikh, Yayalgan, and Klimova (2023), who claimed that Chat GPT is a practical tool for formal English language learning, such as Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Conversational Fluency. The evidence presented in this study strongly suggests that AI has the potential to revolutionize language learning and holds great promise for the future of education.

7.3 Attitude Change

Field notes taken during the experimental group's observation in a genuine classroom setting showed that the students had high motivation, strong self-confidence, and a positive attitude shift. They have a strong desire to learn English. They believed they had helpers they could always talk to and ask questions. The students could answer some questions very quickly; they were willing to raise their hands to discuss with their group. Furthermore, they had fun and participated happily in the class.

Moreover, Zhou & Li (2023) studied the impact of ChatGPT on learning motivation: A study based on Self-Determination Theory aimed to investigate the impact of using ChatGPT as an auxiliary learning tool on university students' learning motivation. Structural equation modeling and regression analysis were employed as the data analysis methods. Questionnaire surveys were conducted to collect data on 196 university students. The results indicated that after using ChatGPT, a negative correlation was found between tension-pressure and

interest-enjoyment. Perceived competence was significantly positively correlated with interest enjoyment, while the correlation between perceived value and interest enjoyment was insignificant. This finding, comparable to that of Ali, Shamsan, Hezam, and Mohammed (2023), demonstrated that ChatGPT generally encourages students to improve their reading and writing abilities. The respondents expressed neutral opinions regarding ChatGPT's influence on improving speaking and listening abilities. The results imply that motivated teaching is enhanced using ChatGPT instead of worrying about ChatGPT's potential drawbacks, which are necessary to conduct more thorough research and use it as a learning tool.

An observation of an experimental group in a real classroom revealed high motivation, self-confidence, and a positive attitude shift among the students, who were eager to learn English and felt supported. The students actively participated in discussions and enjoyed the class. The impact of ChatGPT on university students' learning motivation, finding a negative correlation between tension and interest after using ChatGPT. Perceived competence positively influenced interest enjoyment, and ChatGPT generally improved reading and writing abilities, though its effect on speaking and listening abilities received neutral opinions. These results suggested that ChatGPT can enhance motivated teaching.

8. Further Research

The findings of this study open doors to several promising avenues for further research to expand our understanding of the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language education. Some of these potential areas include:

8.1 Long-Term Effects of AI Integration

While this study provides strong evidence of the immediate impact of AI-driven language learning, it would be valuable to investigate the long-term effects. A longitudinal study could track the progress and retention of language proficiency among students who have undergone extended AI-assisted language learning programs. This would shed light on the sustainability and durability of the observed improvements.

8.2 Comparative Analysis

Comparative studies examining the efficacy of different AI language learning platforms and approaches would offer insights into which AI tools and methods are most effective. This could help educators and policymakers make informed decisions when selecting or developing AI-driven language learning solutions.

8.3 Cross-Cultural Studies

Expanding the research to include diverse cultural and linguistic contexts would provide a comprehensive view of the global applicability of AI-assisted language learning. Comparative studies between Thai students and those from other regions could reveal potential variations in learning outcomes and preferences.

8.4 Pedagogical Integration

Another valuable research avenue is exploring how AI tools can seamlessly integrate into traditional language teaching methods. Investigating the most effective ways to blend AI-driven learning with traditional instruction could provide practical guidance for educators and institutions seeking to implement AI in their curricula.

8.5 Ethical and Privacy Considerations

As AI-driven language learning becomes more prevalent, examining the ethical and privacy implications is crucial. Further research can delve into issues such as data security, student privacy, and the ethical use of AI in education. This would ensure that the benefits of AI are harnessed while safeguarding the rights and interests of learners.

8.6 Teacher Training and AI

Exploring how teachers can be trained to integrate AI into their language teaching practices effectively is a significant area of interest. Investigating the training needs, strategies, and best practices for educators who use AI tools in language education can help bridge the gap between AI and pedagogy.

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Review of English L2 Vocabulary Learning and Teaching: Concepts, Principles, and Pedagogy

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Received: September 27, 2023

Accepted: October 29, 2023

Online Published: October 31, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p80

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p80>

Abstract

Vocabulary knowledge is crucial for comprehending input and generating output. To date, vocabulary learning has been extensively researched regarding incidental vocabulary learning, the effect of various input modes and input enhancement techniques, yet more studies are needed to explore and discuss pedagogical implications. The monograph under review, authored by Lawrence J. Zwier and Frank Boers, bridges the gap between research and practice. The monograph elaborates on L2 vocabulary acquisition from theory development (Chapters 1 & 2), empirical studies (Chapters 3 & 4), curricular design (Chapters 5 to 7), and classroom practice (Chapters 8 to 11) respectively.

Keywords: vocabulary, collocation, incidental vocabulary acquisition, classroom vocabulary teaching, vocabulary techniques and activities

1. Chapters 1 & 2

The first part (Chapters 1 & 2) introduces the terminology of single words and multiword expressions, their categorization, challenges and remedies for classroom teaching of vocabulary. Chapter 1 covers core concepts and categorization of words and reveals the substantial, polysemous and dynamic nature of words. Chapter 2 delineates different types of multiword expressions and discusses the challenges to involve multiword expressions in classroom teaching due to its amount, idiomaticity and non-transparency. In order to cope with these difficulties, pedagogical suggestions are offered based on the usefulness, nontransparency and degree of bondedness. Accordingly, authors recommend three direct instructions, selecting frequent multiword expressions, nontransparent multiword expressions, and items with high mutual information score.

2. Chapter 3

The second part discusses vocabulary research with regard to three questions: why to teach, what to teach, and how to teach vocabulary. Chapter 3 overviews vocabulary studies pertaining to receptive vocabulary knowledge measured by lexical coverage, productive vocabulary knowledge manifested by lexical richness, lexical diversity, and lexical sophistication, as well as incidental vocabulary learning. Vocabulary knowledge is said to play a dominant role in reading comprehension, displayed by lexical coverage at a 95% or 98% level but two questions call for further study. First, while adequate text comprehension can be impacted on by a variety of factors such as topic familiarity (Pulido, 2004) and inference strategies (Laufer, 2020), then to what extent vocabulary knowledge decide text comprehension still remains to be investigated. The second aspect considers lexical coverage at the level of multiword expressions. The last two subsections discuss lexicon-related factors for effortless vocabulary learning, and learner-related variables for successful vocabulary uptake. And the real problem is how to make sophisticated lexical items easier to learn and how to improve learners' motivation, engagement with lexical items and working memory which are not discussed here.

3. Chapter 4

Chapter 4 focuses on intervention studies relating to the effects of classroom-based vocabulary teaching and learning, such as the research designs of quasi-experimental study (e.g., between-group and within-group) and different research perspectives: incidental vocabulary acquisition, deliberate learning approach, and learning strategies. Though research has yielded abundant findings, the authors suggest new research directions. First, research investigating the comparison between gloss and dictionary found no effect of dictionary, partly due to the boom of online dictionary. Thus, future study could compare the impact of gloss and online dictionary. Second, a few research considered output after offering content-based activity, but no research includes typographic enhancement techniques in input to verify whether it could generate significant learning gains in producing multiword expressions. Third, comparatively few studies so far examine long-term effect of inferencing meaning from context and word-part strategy. Lastly, Involvement Load Hypothesis indicates that more engagement learners pay in vocabulary, more learning outcomes they will get. While few studies examined the quality of learners' use of lexical items generated by their own and this quality would indeed influence learning gains. To sum up, the second part informs researchers who are new to vocabulary research designs of possible research topics as well as research gap.

4. Chapter 5, 6 & 7

The third part expounds on curricular design from the macroscopic view of education. Chapter 5 discusses students' vocabulary proficiency, target vocabulary selection for teaching and learning, and expectations for vocabulary acquisition and accumulation. Chapter 6 lays out the aim for evaluating vocabulary knowledge, various test formats for assessing lexical items, and the selection of test format for specific purposes. It is recognized that explicit teaching of vocabulary is not common so far and most teachers leave vocabulary learning for students, thus the authors believe that integrating vocabulary in the curriculum should be the primary aim which is the theme of chapter 7. To achieve this, potential approaches are recommended: Nation's vocabulary instruction program which would be a benign loop to connect input and output during vocabulary learning, and Sökmen's pedagogical themes which attempt to grasp large size and profound depth of vocabulary knowledge.

5. Chapter 8, 9, 10 & 11

The fourth part evaluates viable techniques and activities from the microscopic view of pedagogy by reviewing continuous scenario, acquisition, initial memorization, consolidation, and automatic learning. Chapter 8 discusses four prerequisites for vocabulary knowledge acquisition through input materials, including comprehensible discourse, salient target items and comprehensible items and engagement. Accordingly, instructors could pre-teach novel lexical items which could make materials comprehensible for students and promote retrieval in content-based activities. Then, text-based output tasks could be implemented to entrench vocabulary knowledge in memory. Chapter 9 proposes techniques to promote initial retention of lexical items in memory intentionally through either semantic elaboration or structural elaboration or a combination of both. Association is key word in this chapter by which novel lexical items are integrated into the mental lexicon, such as the comparison between target items and existing vocabulary knowledge. Chapter 10 elaborates on how to strengthen the memory trace and to retrieve vocabulary from mental lexicon. Vocabulary exercises implemented should meet at least four requirements: order of arrangement, repetition, retrieval, and use. In terms of order, exercises should be arranged from less demanding to more demanding, that is, from meaning recall to form recall and then to use. Chapter 11 displays a comprehensive discussion on achieving lifelong learning. It records personal- and environmental-related factors that will generate autonomous study, strategies for vocabulary learning and sources which could be resorted to in self-study.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the monograph makes a comprehensive elaboration on vocabulary-related concepts, research on incidental vocabulary acquisition, deliberate learning, and strategy as well as vocabulary teaching in these aspects. Two types of vocabulary including single words and multiword expressions are crucial in the whole monograph. And two key ideas, retrieval and repetition, are frequently mentioned throughout the book.

This monograph has the following merits. Firstly, the systematic design of four parts, covering basic terminology, the empirical research design, and pedagogical practices. The comprehensive description of vocabulary and

logical design is conducive to develop readers' knowledge on the academic and pedagogical perspective of vocabulary. Secondly, there are no fancy words, opaque jargon in this monograph, and technical words that demands attention are elaborated clearly through studies, examples, charts, etc. This will benefit beginning linguistic students for its readability. Thirdly, the authors introduce research procedure, design and evaluation which are crucial for conducting empirical studies. This will acquaint novel researchers with the methodologies in vocabulary research. Most importantly, it attempts to put the current findings in academia into pedagogical practice which accords with the goal for conducting research and solves practical problems encountered in L2 education.

Nevertheless, the monograph will be more complete and more exhaustive if it ends with a summary chapter. The ending section could involve a summary of the whole monograph, the connections among each chapter, the overall suggestions for language teachers and the gap for illuminating future research. Adding a conclusion part could inform readers of the logical connections among each part and the unsolved problems for future study.

In brief, because of its panoramic elaboration of vocabulary from theories, empirical studies and pedagogical practice, the monograph will attract broad audiences with various purposes in mind. For novice applied linguistic scholars, they will be informed of basic terms, research methodology and practical tasks around vocabulary. For teaching practitioners, they will enjoy the great benefit of the last two parts with practical suggestions. Reading the monograph, further booming vocabulary research and bringing research findings down to earth are the missions for every one of us in the language researching and teaching field.

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Actual Usage of Machine Translation by Japanese University Students and Verification of Test Results

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Received: September 30, 2023

Accepted: October 29, 2023

Online Published: October 31, 2023

doi: 10.5539/elt.v16n11p83

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n11p83>

Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the actual situation of Japanese university students' use of machine translation (MT). The case study focuses on Japanese university students and not only investigates when students use MT, but also examines how their attitudes change before and after they use MT for their assignments. In this study, Google Translate was used as the MT tool, and Microsoft Excel was used for analysis. By analyzing these results, it was found that when students were allowed to use MT, they themselves decided whether or not to use it depending on their task. Of the skills in writing, reading and listening, it is also found that students tend to use MT the most for writing tasks and the least for listening tasks. In addition, no statistical significance of using MT was found for any of these skills, indicating that the use of MT does not necessarily mean that all language-related questions can be solved. These results could provide valuable data for the future introduction of MT into education. The survey included a diverse range of university students selected through an open application process. However, the sample size was limited, so an extensive survey should be undertaken in the future.

Keywords: Machine translation (MT), Japanese university, the Common University Entrance Examination, ETS Criterion

1. Introduction

In recent years, advances in MT have made it possible for us to use high-quality MT inexpensively and easily. Prior studies have shown how MT has become a tool that learners use on a daily basis. (Clifford et al., 2013; Jolly and Maimore, 2015) While it is possible to prohibit students from using MT in class, it is practically impossible to prohibit students from using MT outside of class. This is compounded that the errors generated by MT systems often closely resemble those made by humans, making it exceedingly challenging for educators to discern whether learners are utilizing MT tools or relying solely on their own language proficiency (Stapleton and Kin, 2019). Moreover, despite institutional policies prohibiting the use of MT in relation to assignments that are graded, it is inevitable that students will use MT to work on assignments. O'Neill (2019), in an extensive survey of second-year university students studying Spanish and French, discovered that more than 80% of them engaged with MT even in the situations when its usage was expressly forbidden. In light of these trends, it is imperative to consider the integration of MT as a constructive learning tool. As long as it is no longer possible for teachers to correctly distinguish between machine-generated and non-machine-generated texts, it is impossible to prohibit the use of MT and grade students fairly. In recent years, many Japanese universities have also announced regulations on the use of ICTs such as MT and ChatGPT. Some universities have banned them on a limited basis, but few have stated that they are banned completely. This prompts us to ponder the harmonious coexistence and the extent to which this technology can bolster foreign language education, ultimately enhancing the efficacy of learning experiences. It is conceivable that the rate of MT utilization varies depending on distinct factors, such as the language of instruction and the nature of the tasks assigned. Paradoxically, despite the increasing prevalence of MT, there is a conspicuous dearth of comprehensive research concerning its integration into English language education, particularly in the context of English and Japanese language learning.

With these considerations in mind, this study endeavors to conduct a comprehensive survey to focus on the current status of MT usage among Japanese university students. There is concern that the increasing number of learners using MT will lead to a decline in learners' language skills and thinking ability, but will MT enable learners to solve all language-related problems? The investigation aims to discern the specific junctures at which English learners opt to use MT when undergoing assessments spanning various language skills, including writing, reading, and listening. It also examines the degree of use of MT by proficiency level, to see at what level it is useful for learners. It further seeks to probe the practical implications of MT adoption, particularly when students solve standardized test questions, while investigating any disparities in performance outcomes under conditions where MT utilization is either allowed or prohibited.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies have investigated the use of MT by language learners; Jolley and Maimore (2015) conducted a survey of 128 learners participating in a Spanish program on their MT use. The findings demonstrated a notably high adoption of MT among learners, with a staggering 97.66% utilizing MT in their language learning. The study also probed learners' ethical awareness, with 86.72% of respondents expressing that the acceptability of MT usage hinged on the nature of the task. For instance, the use of MT in presentations or writing assignments was not widely considered as cheating, but its application in translation assignments raised ethical concerns. Thus, it is evident that a significant portion of language learners incorporate MT into their daily academic routine. While there is still a lack of research between languages with different linguistic structures, such as Japanese to English, various studies have already been conducted on the use of MT in European languages to English.

Niño (2020) delved into the utility of MT when students applied it to their assignments. The study engaged 37 Spanish learners, comprising 30 advanced learners, 5 intermediate-advanced learners, 1 intermediate learner, and 1 beginner learner. Participants were tasked with solving reading, listening, writing, and speaking questions using MT, followed by a questionnaire to gauge the efficacy of MT. The results indicated that for reading and writing tasks, the majority of learners (75.6% respectively) found MT to be beneficial, especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and structure. However, advanced learners were more discerning, acknowledging the potential for errors introduced by MT and, consequently, deeming it less indispensable. In contrast, MT did not garner significant recognition for its usefulness in listening and speaking tasks, with only 53.1% of respondents acknowledging that MT aided their understanding in listening tasks and 53.8% in speaking tasks. These outcomes suggest a varied perception of MT's utility depending on the task and proficiency level.

Concurrently, there has been extensive research on MT in foreign language learning in Japan. Oda (2019) conducted a survey examining Japanese university students' attitudes toward MT. In 2019, a questionnaire on MT was administered to 90 students majoring in fields other than English, and the results revealed that 96.7% of the respondents had used MT. Remarkably, only 2.2% believed that MT should be restricted in the context of their college assignments. Intriguingly, only 24.1% of students reported that Japanese-to-English translations using MT yielded satisfactory results, indicating a degree of dissatisfaction with MT quality. Given the widespread adoption of MT, it becomes imperative to explore avenues for its incorporation into university education.

From the educators' perspective, Yamada et al. (2021) indicated a willingness among university instructors to leverage MT in their classrooms. However, the challenge lies in determining how to effectively integrate MT into the teaching process. These studies collectively underscore the increasing prevalence of MT among language learners, emphasizing the necessity to identify the specific tasks for which students employ MT and the extent to which MT can enhance their learning experiences.

3. Method

The participants were 28 university students with varying levels of English proficiency. Participants were recruited from the public and the number of participants was closed on a first-come, first-served basis. Since the English level was self-reported at the time of application, its authenticity is not certain, but from the results of the English test, English ability seemed to be scattered. The recruitment process specified that "English proficiency was not required," with the sole condition being that participants must be able to attend the university in Osaka on the day of the experiment. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel. Participants were tasked with solving reading and listening questions extracted from the Common University Entrance Examination. Additionally, some writing questions were assigned from ETS Criterion (<https://www.ets.org/criterion.html>). Participants were required to answer some of the questions solely using their own abilities, without the aid of MT, while they were given the optional permission to use MT for the remaining questions. In total, there were 20

questions, with 12 from the listening section (A-L), 6 from the reading section (M-R), and 2 from the writing section (S-T). Google Translate was specified as the MT tool.

To maintain uniformity and control, participants were randomly divided into two groups, namely Group A and Group B. They then followed the procedural steps outlined in Figure 1 while completing the questions. In Group A, MT was allowed in Test 1 for reading questions and in Test 2 for listening and writing questions. On the other hand, in Group B, MT was allowed for listening and writing questions in Test 1, and for reading questions in Test 2. This procedure was taken in consideration of the order exchange. In order to survey students' attitudes toward MT, a questionnaire was also conducted before and after they worked on the test. Students are monitored as they take the test and they do not receive any assistance other than MT.

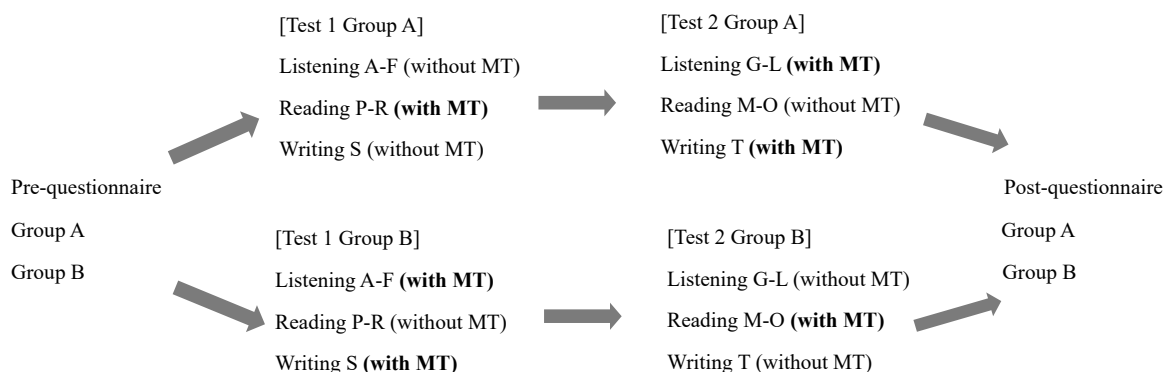


Figure 1. The order of tests

4. Results

4.1 Results of writing test

Table 1, 2, 3, and 4 provides an overview of the average results of the writing test, comprising both with and without MT, for the participants in the current study. Table 1 and 2 compare the differences in results by group. Table 1 shows the results of Group A, which solved the test without MT in Test 1 and used MT in Test 2. Table 3 shows the results of Group B. Group B solved the test with MT in Test 1 and without MT in Test 2. Tables 3 and 4 compare the differences in results by test, which means that scores are compared when participants solve the same problem with and without MT.

Table 1. Writing test results with and without MT in Group A

	Test 1 (without MT)	Test 2 (with MT)
Mean	1.466666667	1.933333333
Variance	1.40952381	2.20952381
Observation	15	15
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.180788148	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	14	
t	-1.046826941	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.156458566	
t Critical One-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.312917133	
t Critical Two-tail	2.144786688	

Table 2. Writing test results with and without MT in Group B

	Test 1 (with MT)	Test 2 (without MT)
Mean	2	1.230769231
Variance	2.5	0.525641026
Observation	13	13
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.07269493	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	12	
t	1.640299655	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.063437188	
t Critical One-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.126874377	
t Critical Two-tail	2.17881283	

Table 3. Writing test results for Test 1 (Group A: without MT, Group B: with MT)

	Group A (without MT)	Group B (with MT)
Mean	1.466666667	2
Variance	1.40952381	2.5
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	22	
t	-0.996796027	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.164850822	
t Critical One-tail	1.717144374	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.329701645	
t Critical Two-tail	2.073873068	

Table 4. Writing test results for Test 2 (Group A: with MT, Group B: without MT)

	Group A (with MT)	Group B (without MT)
Mean	1.933333333	1.230769231
Variance	2.20952381	0.525641026
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	21	
t	1.621484269	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.059916459	
t Critical One-tail	1.720742903	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.119832918	
t Critical Two-tail	2.079613845	

In the writing test, it appears that both Group A and Group B achieved higher scores when MT was not used. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between the two groups.

4.2 Results of Reading Test

Table 5, 6, 7, and 8 provides an overview of the average results of the reading test, comprising both with and without MT, for the participants in the current study. Tables 5 and 6 compare the differences in results by group. Table 5 shows the results of Group A, which used MT in Test 1 and without MT in Test 2. Table 6 shows the results of Group B. Group B solved the test without MT in Test 1 and with MT in Test 2. Tables 7 and 8 compare the differences in results by test, which means that scores are compared when participants solve the same problem with and without MT.

Table 5. Reading test results with and without MT in Group A

	Test 1 (with MT)	Test 2 (without MT)
Mean	27.26666667	23.66666667
Variance	81.92380952	60.52380952
Observation	15	15
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.669833691	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	14	
t	2.010069662	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.032049753	
t Critical One-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.064099505	
t Critical Two-tail	2.144786688	

Table 6. Reading test results with and without MT in Group B

	Test 2 (with MT)	Test 1 (without MT)
Mean	22.53846154	20.38461538
Variance	65.76923077	67.58974359
Observation	13	13
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.666568553	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	12	
t	1.164478586	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.133429385	
t Critical One-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.26685877	
t Critical Two-tail	2.17881283	

Table 7. Reading test results for Test 1 (Group A: with MT, Group B: without MT)

	Group A (with MT)	Group B (without MT)
Mean	27.26666667	22.53846154
Variance	81.92380952	65.76923077
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	26	
t	1.457715513	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.07844642	
t Critical One-tail	1.70561792	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.15689284	
t Critical Two-tail	2.055529439	

Table 8. Reading test results for Test 2 (Group A: without MT, Group B: with MT)

	Group A (without MT)	Group B (with MT)
Mean	23.66666667	20.38461538
Variance	60.52380952	67.58974359
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	25	
t	1.080058629	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.145213006	
t Critical One-tail	1.708140761	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.290426011	
t Critical Two-tail	2.059538553	

In the Reading test, it is noteworthy that the scores in the second test were consistently lower, irrespective of the utilization of MT. Considering this observation, a statistical analysis was conducted to ascertain the significance of the mean difference, with the exclusion of the four participants who did not use MT during the reading test.

Tables 9 and 10 offer a comprehensive breakdown of each participant's scores in both groups, summarizing the variations between scores with and without MT, along with their respective scores for Test 1 and Test 2. Additionally, Tables 11, 12, 13, and 14 delve into a more detailed analysis of the results for each participant.

Table 9. Score results for each participant using MT (Group A)

	Degree of MT use	Test 1 with MT	Test 2 without MT	Test 2 (without MT) - Test 1 (with MT)	with MT - without MT
A1	21	38	36	-2	2
A2	19	37	33	-4	4
A3	4	34	31	-3	3
A4	18	32	28	-4	4
A5	8	23	25	2	-2
A6	14	17	23	6	-6
A7	4	25	21	-4	4
A8	15	20	21	1	-1
A9	8	15	20	5	-5
A10	14	40	18	-22	22
A11	21	26	18	-8	8
A12	9	26	13	-13	13
A13	14	10	8	-2	2

Table 10. Score results for each participant using MT (Group B)

	Degree of MT use	Test 1 without MT	Test 2 with MT	Test 2 (with MT) - Test 1 (without MT)	with MT - without MT
B1	4	32	31	-1	-1
B2	4	32	26	-6	-6
B3	18	29	28	-1	-1
B4	15	28	31	3	3
B5	18	26	17	-9	-9
B6	21	24	9	-15	-15
B7	21	20	28	8	8
B8	10	17	20	3	3
B9	7	13	16	3	3
B10	16	10	5	-5	-5
B11	19	9	14	5	5

Table 11. Reading test results with and without MT in Group A *Exclude those who did not use MT

	Test 1 (with MT)	Test 2 (without MT)
Mean	26.38461538	22.69230769
Variance	88.58974359	62.73076923
Observation	13	13
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.640016826	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	12	
t	1.780629721	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.050140934	
t Critical One-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.100281869	
t Critical Two-tail	2.17881283	

Table 12. Reading test results with and without MT in Group B *Exclude those who did not use MT

	Test 2 (with MT)	Test 1 (without MT)
Mean	21.81818182	20.45454545
Variance	72.76363636	81.07272727
Observation	11	11
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.699046666	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	10	
t	0.663560933	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.26098715	
t Critical One-tail	1.812461123	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.5219743	
t Critical Two-tail	2.228138852	

Table 13. Reading test results for Test 1 (Group A: with MT, Group B: without MT)

*Exclude those who did not use MT

	Group A (with MT)	Group B (without MT)
Mean	26.38461538	21.81818182
Variance	88.58974359	72.76363636
Observation	13	11
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	22	
t	1.246085033	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.112919912	
t Critical One-tail	1.717144374	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.225839824	
t Critical Two-tail	2.073873068	

Table 14. Reading test results for Test 2 (Group A: without MT, Group B: with MT)

*Exclude those who did not use MT

	Group B (with MT)	Group A (without MT)
Mean	22.69230769	20.45454545
Variance	62.73076923	81.07272727
Observation	13	11
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	20	
t	0.640782617	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.264469244	
t Critical One-tail	1.724718243	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.528938489	
t Critical Two-tail	2.085963447	

Despite the exclusion of participants who made minimal or no use of MT, the statistical analysis still revealed no significant difference in the mean scores between scenarios with and without MT. Furthermore, participants were requested to specify which reading questions they employed MT for. Table 15 presents the average number of correct answers and the average degree of MT usage, categorized by each of the reading questions.

Table 15. Average number of correct answers and average frequency of MT use for each reading test (Group A)

	Average number of correct answers for multiple questions	Percentage of correct answers out of 15	Average frequency of MT use
Question P	11.8	79%	3.2
Question Q	10.6	71%	4.2
Question R	8.8	59%	4.3

Table 16. Average number of correct answers and average frequency of MT use for each reading test (Group B)

	Average number of correct answers for multiple questions	Percentage of correct answers out of 13	Average frequency of MT use
Question M	9.4	72%	3.7
Question N	6.6	51%	4
Question O	4.8	37%	4.5

In the case of the final questions (Question R and Question O), the sentences are longer, which naturally increases the level of difficulty. Notably, when we examined MT usage for each question, it became apparent that more MT was used for the more challenging questions.

4.3 Results of Listening Test

Table 17, 18, 19, and 20 provides an overview of the average results of the listening test, comprising both with and without MT, for the participants in the current study. Tables 17 and 18 compare the differences in results by group. Table 17 shows the results of Group A, which solved the test without MT in Test 1 and used MT in Test 2. Table 18 shows the results of Group B. Group B used MT in Test 1 and without MT in Test 2. Tables 19 and 20 compare the differences in results by test, which means that scores are compared when participants solve the same problem with and without MT.

Table 17. Listening test results with and without MT in Group A

	Test 1 (without MT)	Test 2 (with MT)
Mean	65.33333333	68.8
Variance	278.0952381	411.8857143
Observation	15	15
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.884513538	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	14	
t	-1.405405405	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.090851234	
t Critical One-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.181702468	
t Critical Two-tail	2.144786688	

Table 18. Listening test results with and without MT in Group B

	Test 1 (with MT)	Test 2 (without MT)
Mean	60.07692308	65.76923077
Variance	132.9102564	416.025641
Observation	13	13
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.720553331	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	12	
t	-1.416068043	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.091092669	
t Critical One-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.182185338	
t Critical Two-tail	2.17881283	

Table 19. Listening test results for Test 1 (Group A: without MT, Group B: with MT)

	Group A (without MT)	Group B (with MT)
Mean	65.33333333	60.07692308
Variance	278.0952381	132.9102564
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	25	
t	0.98009466	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.168214737	
t Critical One-tail	1.708140761	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.336429475	
t Critical Two-tail	2.059538553	

Table 20. Listening test results for Test 2 (Group A: with MT, Group B: without MT)

	Group A (with MT)	Group B (without MT)
Mean	68.8	65.76923077
Variance	411.8857143	416.025641
Observation	15	13
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	25	
t	0.393039947	
P(T<=t) One-tail	0.348810791	
t Critical One-tail	1.708140761	
P(T<=t) Two-tail	0.697621581	
t Critical Two-tail	2.059538553	

In the Listening test, participants achieved higher scores in the second test, regardless of whether they utilized MT or not.

4.4 Types of Exams in Which Students Used MT for the Most

Additionally, apart from the aforementioned findings, the study also investigated in which skills - writing, reading and listening - participants would use MT the most if they were permitted to use it. The results were counted in a post-test questionnaire that asked, "To what extent did you use MT in solving this problem?"

Table 21. Mean degree of MT used

	Group A	Group B
Writing	6.1	6.2
Reading	3.9	4.1
Listening	2.2	3

The survey results revealed that MT is primarily utilized in writing tasks. Conversely, fewer individuals resorted to MT for listening and reading tasks compared to what was initially anticipated.

4.5 Differences in the Degree of Use of MT and Scores by Examinee's English Level

The study also analyzed how the degree of use of MT varies by English proficiency level. In order to group the students by proficiency level, they were divided into the following categories: 80% or higher, 60-79%, 40-59%, 20-39%, and 0-19% for the percentage of correct answers when they answered the questions on their own without using MT. After that, the average efficiency score and average degree of MT use for each group were calculated and are summarized in Table 22. The value in (D) is the sum of the values of the three items in the questionnaire that asked how much MT was used in the reading test.

Table 22. Degree of use and effectiveness of MT by English proficiency level

Percentage of correct answers without MT	Score	(A) Number of Applicants	(B) with MT- without MT	(C)=(B)/(A) Average efficiency score	(D) Degree of MT use	(E)=(D)/(A) Average Machine Usage
80-100%	32-40 points	4	-1	-0.3	48	12
60-79%	24-31 points	10	-21	-2.1	111	11
40-59%	16-23 points	9	30	3.3	110	12
20-39%	8-15 points	5	18	3.6	65	13
0-19%	0-7 points	0	0	0	0	0

As depicted by the results in (E), there is no noteworthy difference in self-reported MT usage across varying English proficiency levels. In contrast, the value in (C) shows that the average efficiency score, signifying the effectiveness of MT usage, tended to be higher as English proficiency levels decreased.

4.6 Comparison of participants' attitudes toward MT before and after the test

To investigate students' perceptions of MT, a pre-test and post-test questionnaire was administered. The top 10 and bottom 10 scoring items have been extracted and are summarized in Tables 23, 24, 25, and 26. Among these, the following five questions display statistically significant (*) differences in means before and after the responses:

- Using MT eliminates English spelling errors.
- Using MT (from English to Japanese) increases the number of unnatural sentences with direct translations.
- Using MT eliminates English spelling errors.
- Using MT makes it easier to write English.
- If MT becomes widespread, there will be no need for English dictionaries.

Table 23. Top 10 with the highest score (Pre-test)

Group A + B Questionnaire entries	Pre		Post		Different between pre and post		Test
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	
(When translating from Japanese to English,) some documents are suitable for machine translation and some are not.	6.1	0.7	6.0	1.0	-0.07	0.31	0.502
(When translating from English to Japanese,) some documents are suitable for machine translation and some are not.	6.1	0.7	5.9	1.3	-0.18	0.55	0.362
Before using machine translation, one should learn how to use machine translation properly.	5.9	0.8	5.9	1.8	0.07	1.05	0.611
Machine translation helps to get the gist.	5.8	1.3	5.6	1.6	-0.18	0.38	0.443
Using machine translation eliminates English spelling errors.	5.8	1.6	6.6	0.5	0.82	-1.13	0.021*
Using machine translation makes English assignments easier than when machine translation is not used.	5.7	2.1	5.5	1.5	-0.25	-0.62	0.238
Using machine translation (from English to Japanese) increases the number of unnatural sentences with direct translations.	5.7	1.0	4.9	1.8	-0.75	0.81	0.023*
Using machine translation helps to read difficult texts, such as English papers.	5.6	2.1	5.8	1.8	0.14	-0.29	0.913
Using machine translation, users can write sentences in English faster than without machine translation.	5.5	2.0	5.6	3.7	0.11	1.70	0.804
In college classes, students become lazy if they are allowed to use machine translation.	5.4	1.2	5.3	1.4	-0.11	0.19	0.638

Table 24. Top 10 with the highest score (Post-test)

Group A + B Questionnaire entries	Pre		Post		Different between pre and post		Test
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	
Using machine translation eliminates English spelling errors.	5.8	1.6	6.6	0.5	0.82	-1.13	0.021*
(When translating from Japanese to English,) some documents are suitable for machine translation and some are not.	6.1	0.7	6.0	1.0	-0.07	0.31	0.502
Before using machine translation, one should learn how to use machine translation properly.	5.9	0.8	5.9	1.8	0.07	1.05	0.611
(When translating from English to Japanese,) some documents are suitable for machine translation and some are not.	6.1	0.7	5.9	1.3	-0.18	0.55	0.362
Using machine translation makes it easier to write English.	4.8	2.8	5.9	1.6	1.07	-1.24	0.017*
Using machine translation helps to read difficult texts, such as English papers.	5.6	2.1	5.8	1.8	0.14	-0.29	0.913
Machine translation helps to get the gist.	5.8	1.3	5.6	1.6	-0.18	0.38	0.443
Using machine translation, users can write sentences in English faster than without machine translation.	5.5	2.0	5.6	3.7	0.11	1.70	0.804
Using machine translation helps to read simple English sentences.	4.7	2.6	5.5	2.1	0.82	-0.47	0.089
Using machine translation makes English assignments easier than when machine translation is not used.	5.7	2.1	5.5	1.5	-0.25	-0.62	0.238

Table 25. Worst 10 with lowest scores (Pre-test)

Group A + B Questionnaire entries	Pre		Post		Different between pre and post		Test
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need to learn English.	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.0	-0.18	-0.44	0.22
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for translators.	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	-0.14	0.08	0.355
Machine translation should be used from elementary school.	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.0	-0.11	-0.52	0.67
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for interpreters.	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.9	-0.36	0.47	0.251
Using machine translation makes it easier to remember English grammar.	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.4	-0.07	-0.52	0.798
Using machine translation should be used from junior high school.	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.4	-0.11	-0.71	0.577
Using machine translation makes it easier to remember English words.	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.9	-0.46	-0.55	0.242
Using machine translation makes it easier to listen and comprehend English.	3.4	2.7	3.3	3.0	-0.14	0.25	0.707
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for English dictionaries.	3.5	4.3	2.8	3.0	-0.71	-1.27	0.035*
Machine translation should be used from high school.	3.6	2.6	3.9	2.2	0.32	-0.30	0.332

Table 26. Worst 10 with lowest scores (Post-test)

Group A + B Questionnaire entries	Pre		Post		Different between pre and post		Test
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need to learn English.	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.0	-0.18	-0.44	0.22
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for translators.	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	-0.14	0.08	0.355
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for interpreters.	2.7	2.4	2.4	2.9	-0.36	0.47	0.251
Machine translation should be used from elementary school.	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.0	-0.11	-0.52	0.67
If machine translation becomes widespread, there will be no need for English dictionaries.	3.5	4.3	2.8	3.0	-0.71	-1.27	0.035*
Using machine translation makes it easier to remember English words.	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.9	-0.46	-0.55	0.242
Using machine translation should be used from junior high school.	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.4	-0.11	-0.71	0.577
Using machine translation makes it easier to remember English grammar.	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.4	-0.07	-0.52	0.798
Using machine translation makes it easier to listen and comprehend English.	3.4	2.7	3.3	3.0	-0.14	0.25	0.707
Allowing the use of machine translation in university classes will improve students' English language skills	3.6	3.1	3.3	3.0	-0.29	-0.10	0.507

For the following two items, there is a correlation coefficient in the range of -0.4, indicating a "negative correlation" level with the results of solving Reading without MT:

- Using MT makes it easier to listen and comprehend English.
- If MT becomes widespread, there will be no need to learn English.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It has become evident that not all students utilize MT even when it is permitted, and their usage of MT varies depending on the task. Furthermore, this study has revealed that there is no statistical advantage to using MT across any of the language skills, whether in writing, reading, or listening. These findings underscore that the utilization of MT does not guarantee a solution to all language-related questions. The survey results indicate that, while most students used MT for writing tasks, it is not as effective for listening. This outcome aligns with Niño's (2020) research, which suggested that MT is less beneficial in language teaching for speaking tasks. MT does not resolve all issues, and the fact that students use MT daily did not mean that they would no longer have problems to solve on their own in learning English. Moreover, it is surprising to note that there was less usage of MT for reading questions than initially anticipated, and the test score results were equally unexpected. Additionally, the study revealed an increase in MT usage as the test questions grew more challenging. This suggests that learners may have perceived it as more efficient to address easier questions on their own, rather than relying on MT. Further detailed analysis unveiled those individuals with higher English proficiency often achieved negative scores when using MT, while those with lower proficiency levels yielded positive scores. From this, we can infer that MT may be more helpful for learners in the intermediate and lower proficiency ranges.

As far as monitoring them, participants often used MT to help them understand in their native language. Even when MT was used for English-to-Japanese translations, it could not always provide the answer. While it may have assisted in the process of converting English into Japanese, this did not necessarily result in correct answers. Errors made when using MT to solve the questions should be compared to those made when people solved the questions on their own, but no comparison was made in the present analysis. The participants in this study were college students who were gathered through an open application process, and while the participants were diverse, the sample size was not large enough. In future analysis, we would like to increase the sample size. In addition, to isolate the effects of the practice, a control group that would take the test twice without MT should have been included, but could not be done in this study. We would like to focus on qualitative research in addition to quantitative research by collecting qualitative feedback from participants on the use of MT for each question.

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